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FROM A WOMAN'S
NOTE BOOK

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**FROM A WOMAN'S
NOTE-BOOK**



FROM A WOMAN'S NOTE-BOOK

STUDIES IN MODERN GIRLHOOD
AND OTHER SKETCHES

BY

MRS. E. T. COOK

AUTHOR OF "THE BRIDE'S BOOK," ETC.

LONDON
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1903

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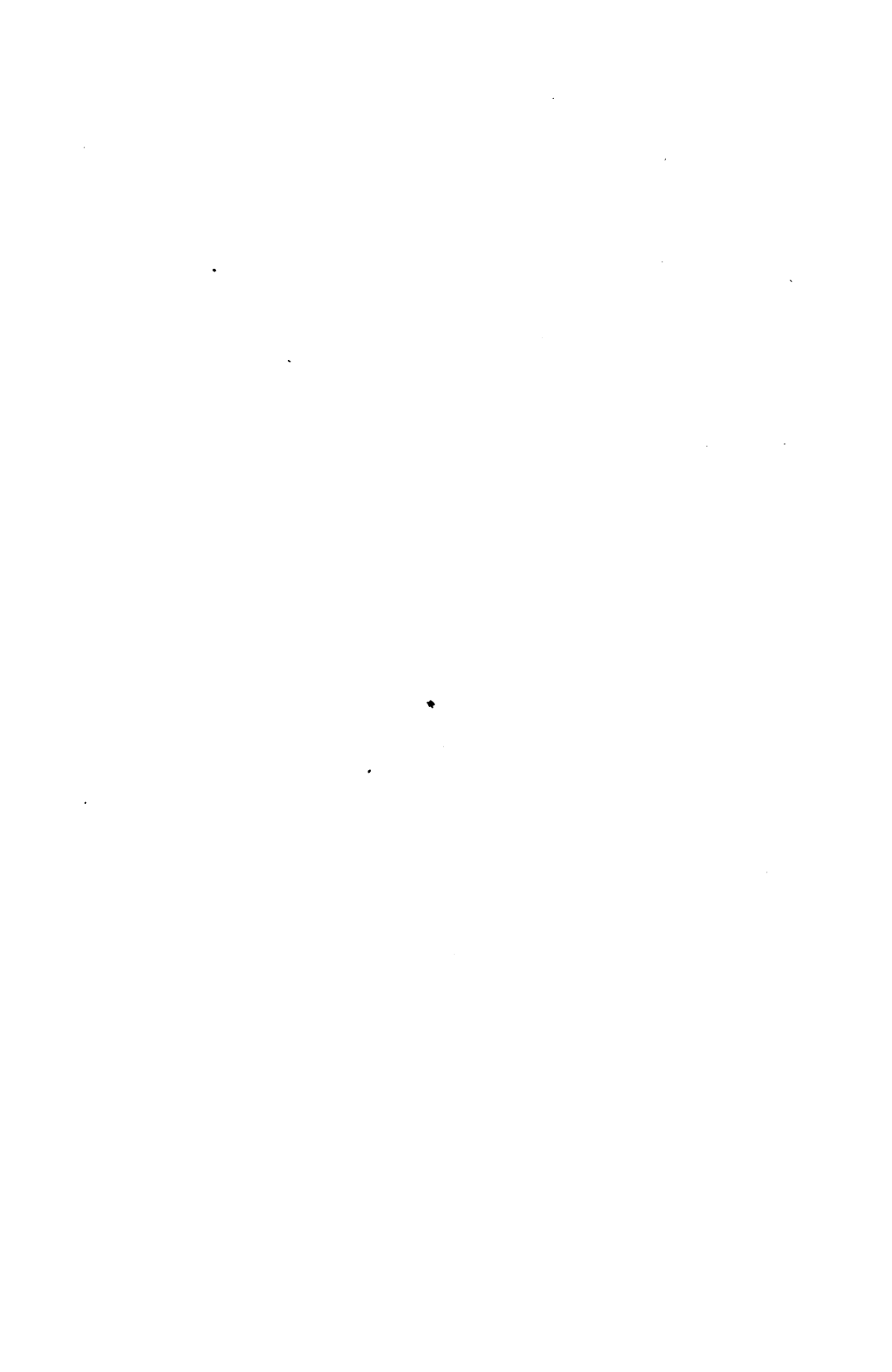
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NOTE

The papers collected in this volume were written by the author at various times between 1891 and 1903; their unity is that of the point of view. Most of them appeared in one or other of the following publications:—“Belgravia,” the “Gentleman’s Magazine,” “Good Words,” “Macmillan’s Magazine,” the “National Review,” “The Outlook,” the “Pall Mall Gazette,” “Temple Bar,” and the “Woman at Home.” I am indebted to the proprietors of these periodicals for permission to reprint the papers here. The author put her observations into a personal form, but it need not be inferred that every such characterisation is biographical.

E. T. C.



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FROM A WOMAN'S NOTE-BOOK

I

A MODERN HIGH-SCHOOL GIRL

ETHEL is a High-School girl of seventeen ; and I am going to tell of a tour I made with her in the summer vacation.

Now Ethel is a pretty girl, sweet and well-mannered ; indeed she comes up generally to so high a standard of excellence in girls, that I am afraid I shall seem but a cross-grained female for relating the following story : and yet it is all true ; I have not enlarged on it by one word. What I would like to discover is where the fault lay. I will explain how it all came about.

But first I must mention, that as I had lived a rather secluded life in the country, perhaps I was a little old-fashioned in my ideas. My

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views on education have perforce been theoretic, my chief companions being my books. I had a family of nieces who attended a High School recently founded near London, and said to be most excellent in its teaching and results. I did not often see the girls, but I duly received from their mother accounts of their progress;—how Ethel had just begun Latin, how Rose was first in chemistry, and how Daisy had got the second prize in mathematics. I have still the letter which Ethel (aged then about nine) wrote me, in a scrawly child's hand, to tell me of her first going to school. This was it:—

“MY DEAR AUNT,—I have begun at the High School this Christmas, I like it very much. Mother can't teach me any more. She used to help me with French, but French isn't what it was. The teaching at the school is quite equal to harrow winchester and eton. I am your loveing niece, ETHEL.”

(The child is mother of the woman—or girl; and Ethel, it may be observed, even then

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knew how to make the best of her small attainments.)

The girls' progress seemed to be excellent, and I, too, became a firm believer in High Schools. All that the girl of the past lacked, I thought to myself, the girl of the future will possess. She will have wasted none of her time on the foolish samplers and cross-stitch of her grandmother's times, or the still more useless crewel-work of her mother's youth. She will have a well-trained mind, keenly alive to new impressions, and ready to seize upon the best part of everything that comes in her way.

Accordingly, when she was just seventeen, I determined to give Ethel a treat, and take her for a foreign tour during the summer vacation. Her small outfit was soon ready, and she met me at Charing Cross one bright July morning in the happiest frame of mind. She had never been out of England before.

(Human Nature has always been my favourite study, and I must here confess that the wish to take Ethel as my travelling

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companion had originated partly in pure selfishness, as I promised to myself much enjoyment from seeing the effect of foreign travel on a young and untried mind, fresh from the stimulating power of a High School education.)

Ethel, as I have said, is pretty. Although tall, she has none of the awkwardness and all the grace of youth, which makes people often think her less of a child than she really is. She was quietly and tastefully dressed, in a pretty blue serge travelling dress "picked out" with red. I saw many people look at her admiringly,—and felt proud of my charming companion. She enjoyed the breezy crossing, and did full justice to the delicious lunch of the Calais "Gare Maritime." Two little, plaintive English ladies who were surreptitiously eating their own ham-sandwiches to a "demi-siphon," which they had ordered from the waiter, looked at her approvingly.

"Dear me," said Ethel, as we travelled towards Bâle, "how very like 'abroad' is to England!"

She quite enjoyed the night journey, and emerged rosy from it, while I, alas! was racked

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with sick-headache. She had brought in her bag two school-books, which at first she made a continual show of studying; one was a history book, the other experimental chemistry. I do not exactly know of what use the latter was supposed to be, as one could hardly practise chemistry in the train—especially during a night journey—but I shall have more to say of both these works anon.

We had lovely weather, and stayed, before leaving the beaten track, at the usual kind of cosmopolitan first-class hotel. Ethel liked the lifts in these, and never lost an opportunity of going up or down in them. I think it was with something of this feeling that she enjoyed the St. Gothard railway. We stayed at Lugano, and here, after several days of comfortable idleness, I suggested that Ethel should indite a letter home. She yawned.

“Oh, auntie, what’s the use? They’ll know that nothing can have happened to me. Besides, letter-writing is a thing of the past.”

Is filial affection a thing of the past too? I thought as I reflected on the long double-sheeted effusions I had been used to pen in my

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youth, whenever I left home for a day or two. However, on this occasion, Ethel had to make letter-writing a thing of the present, and here is what she wrote :—

“MY DEAR MOTHER,—We got here on Thursday at 3 P.M. This is a very nice hotel, and the dinners are very good, and seven courses long. The railway carriages coming over the St. Gothard are such curious shapes—little square rooms with a gallery running all along one side. We had lunch at the tunnel, this was the menu—fish and potatoes, mutton and beans (a vegetable I didn't like), and fruit. I didn't think the cooking was half so good as our Mary's.

“Auntie couldn't eat, as she was sick. Ask Miss Hicks if she has seen my geometry book. I must stop now. Your loving

ETHEL.”

I gasped as I folded up this effusion, but Ethel was not conscious of any shortcomings. She talked away merrily all dinner-time, chiefly about Miss Hicks (her geometry mistress) and the school-girls. I—well, later on I yearned

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even to hear of Miss Hicks. For this was in the early days of our travels; and there came a change.

We went up into the glacier solitudes, and stayed for a week in the heart of the great mountains. Ethel grew sad and silent; all her native brightness forsook her. She was still docile and amiable, but it was evident that she did not care much for scenery. "Perhaps she longs for society," I thought; "like takes to like; and I can be but dull company for a young girl." But I must confess that Ethel disappointed me by her lack of enthusiasm.

"Well, Ethel," I said on arriving, "what do you think of the Alps?"

"They don't look so very high," my niece remarked feebly, raising her eyes as though to look at Monte Rosa were rather a tiresome duty.

And then she wouldn't, or said she couldn't, walk. I, who am elderly, tramped gaily all day—but Ethel, aged seventeen, strong and rosy, declared that walking knocked her up.

"Nobody goes in for walking now," she said; "we play fives and cricket."

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Mules were seldom to be had in this particular place ; so after three days of it, Ethel quietly took to her bed. She called her complaint "sunstroke," but as she was in no pain, had no fever, and ate her dinner with a will, I have some suspicion that the sunstroke existed entirely in her imagination. A lady staying in the hotel to whom I confided my troubles, confirmed these theories. "Oh, it's nothing," she said ; "girls of the present day are often like that. There's nothing they won't do to avoid being taken for a walk." This was unfortunate, as I had taken Ethel with me abroad, for the express purpose of taking walks. I remember reading a story somewhere about a young couple who, settling out in the wilds of California, hired a "yeller gal" to do the housecleaning. The yeller gal cleaned just one room, and was then seen quietly to walk away. She had had about enough of it, she said when interrogated,—and she couldn't be persuaded to come back. "Them yeller gals," concluded the narrator, "is jest about the meanest trash." Ethel, although I wouldn't wish to call her "the meanest trash," yet imitated the "yeller

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gal" in her tactics. Politely and silently she declined further exercise. She sat in the village meadow with her chemistry book,—which, by the way, is doubtless still reposing in that meadow, for Ethel never found out its loss till we were many miles away, and already thinking of the return journey.

Ethel's not being able to walk altered my plans. The mountains bored her so much, that, though the weather was still perfectly cloudless, and the high Alps most tempting for a prolonged stay, we left at the end of a week for Venice.

As we were leaving the valley, and just as "the sun looked over the mountain's rim," I took a farewell glance at Monte Rosa, glistening in the morning light, and quoted the well-known lines:—

"How faintly-flush'd, how phantom-fair
Was Monte Rosa, hanging there
A thousand shadowy-pencill'd valleys
And snowy dells in a golden air."

"Is that your own composition?" asked Ethel, turning round upon her mule.

We went to Milan. Ethel recovered

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altogether there, and, under the fascination of the shops, was quite well for a day or two. She enjoyed the spiral staircases in the Cathedral, with something of the same feeling, I imagine, as she had enjoyed the hotel lifts and the St. Gothard railway. We visited the Brera also; but here Ethel showed such evident signs of boredom that I dared not stay too long, fearing a return of the sunstroke.

"Are all these pictures hand-painted?" Ethel had asked on first entering.

I think she would have felt more respect for them if they had been Aspinalled by an entirely new machine process.

Next day we started for Venice. I really think Ethel's limpness on that journey was partially to be accounted for by the heat (it was hot as it only knows how to be hot in the Lombard plains), and she soon relapsed into the "squeezed lemon" condition that Ruskin comments upon so severely in *Fors Clavigera*, *à propos* of some travelling companions on this very journey. I felt for her, but could not reconcile my conscience to letting her pass by all the points of interest unnoticed.

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"There is Catullus' Villa, Ethel," I cried, forgetting the heat, as we came upon the promontory of Sirmione, and the blue Garda Lake glittering in the sun.

Ethel half-opened her eyes. "Do you know him?" she asked. She had taken a prize for Latin last term. In Peschiera, half-an-hour later, she did not show even a semblance of interest. All the great scenes of history and art, all the places made sacred by long association, were as nothing to the mind of this highly-trained school-girl. Squeezed lemons, indeed! Squeezed lemons are all too inadequate to describe Ethel's martyred attitude. At Verona, I dared not even mention Juliet's house, or the Roman amphitheatre! And then we crossed the Mestre bridge over the lagoon, lit with the golden fires of sunset. How well I remembered my first crossing of that bridge! What a thrill it brings into my heart, even now, to recall how I had craned my neck out of the windows to catch the first sight of Venice! But that was when I was a girl, thirty years ago. My niece belongs to the

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modern school. She was yawning desperately, I noticed, in her corner of the carriage.

But Ethel enjoyed Venice, too, in her way, and for a time. "What a heavenly place!" she exclaimed next morning, as she took me from one sham-jewellery shop window to another. She bought a gondola-brooch for a franc, and a string of blue beads for sixty centimes. With these she was evidently more pleased than with the shining façade of St. Mark. I am not certain whether she ever really looked at that during our week's stay in Venice.

But, then, churches in general were a grief to her. There were so very many of them to be seen. They made her feel so giddy that she generally had to be assisted back to the gondola, there to wait till I had finished my inspection of some rare Bellini in the sacristy. I am ashamed to say that, so far from "doing" the Ducal Palace, Ruskin in hand, Ethel never got beyond the courtyard at the foot of the "Giant's Staircase." Here she paused, and said, as if the idea had occurred to her for the first time:

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"How many doges were there at once?"

"Only one," I answer, with a gasp; "they reigned in order like kings, you know."

"What a very big house for only one doge!"

Oh! Shade of Shakespere!

However, to do Ethel justice, she was interested for quite two days in Venice. But, when her small stock of money failed, boredom began again as in the mountains. She never spoke to the natives, either in the Alps or in Venice. For one thing, she knew very little German or Italian. I wondered at this, as I knew that she "did" Schiller's *Thirty Years' War*, and Pellico's *Prigioni* for school, and these are by no means beginners' books. But Ethel explained innocently, "Oh, mother always looks out all the words for me in the dictionary, and then I learn the bit she has translated for me by heart, so that I can read it off to the German mistress next day."

"But, my dear child," I remonstrated, "what a way of learning a language! Does your teacher know this?"

"Oh, it's all right. I should never keep my

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place in the school, if I didn't do that," Ethel said easily. She had, indeed, no great taste for languages, and her attitude to Italian generally approached nearly to the celebrated Mr. Lillyvick's when informed that "l'eau" was French for water. "I call that a poor language—very poor."

I had expected her to take some interest in the picturesque Venetians and their black-eyed babies (Ethel loved babies at home); but all the notice she took of them was to be horrified at their mothers' ignorance of hygienic principles.

"Oh, they'll die," she said comfortably, turning away from a group of swaddled infants, as if further comment was unnecessary on people who didn't wear Jaeger garments, and tied up their babies' legs in such a funny fashion.

Ethel was essentially a child of her generation. She was also very insular and very persistent. She was much shocked with the short frocks, bare legs, and late hours of the fashionable Italian infant:

"How wicked," she cried, "how shameful

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of its parents to let it sit up till eleven and eat ices!"

(To do Ethel justice, I must say that the particular child singled out for opprobrium was seated between its parents on the Piazza, enjoying a *couvert d'enfant*, or dinner consisting of a sardine, a soup, an ice, and a dessert—and all this at 10.30 in the evening.)

But I argued with Ethel on the main question. "As to the short frocks," I said, "we all wore frocks just as short, and had legs quite as bare when *I* was a child. It's a matter of fashion."

"That's the reason why you, none of you, had any constitutions!" cried Ethel triumphantly, as if that quite disposed of the matter.

In vain I assured her that, on the contrary, we had not all succumbed to disease. She did not heed my remarks. It is one of Ethel's little ways to think that nothing was ever done rightly in the dark ages before the High School days. As for me, I am convinced that she often regards me with infinite pity for being so ill-educated, so ignorant of the higher

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mathematics, and I wince before her searching gaze.

Ethel wrote to her mother from Venice thus:—

“DEAR MOTHER,—I like this place. But we’ve been here two days, and seen all there is to be seen, and I hope Auntie won’t stay much longer. I don’t like going into churches, they feel so mouldy inside. And the sanitary system of Venice seems very bad, there are no end of smells. I’ve bought a blue necklace and some *nougat*. There’s a lovely sweet-shop near the Piazza. Is my School Report out yet?”

“I like this place,” struck me as a decidedly minimum view of Venice, but I forbore to comment.

Ethel did not seem to want to take any little presents home to her mother and sisters; all the trifles she bought seemed more or less for herself, with the exception of a big photograph she got for the School. I recalled how my sister and I, at her age, had denied ourselves sweets and ices, nay, would have gone

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without our dinner if we could, in order to buy presents for all the home circle, not even forgetting the cook. Is this again, I pondered, the result of the "unhomeliness" of a High-School education?

We had perfect weather. The Grand Canal glimmered every evening in the moonlight, as our gondola glided along it. Every afternoon we sailed on the lagoons, and gazed on "the blue islands of Paduan hills, poised in the golden west." But alas for the "vital feelings of delight" that should have stirred Ethel's breast! They were non-existent.

Ethel now so often wore a martyred air, and her boredom increased so much, that I was led to hasten the return journey to Paris. Her spirits rose for this journey. "I never like to stay more than a day in one place," she confessed. She read a novel during most of the way back, and this time I forbore to worry her by pointing out places of interest. Once, on the lake of Como, at mid-day, she started up with an excited air from her book. I thought she was going to expatiate on the beauty of the situation of Bellagio shining in the sunlight,

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but it was only: "Now the sixth form will be going down to 'rec'!"

(I believe, in my own heart, that the only pleasure she derived at last from seeing places was in the prospect of being able to tell the "sixth" that she had done so.)

But she did enjoy one thing in Paris—the Eiffel Tower. We went to the very top; nothing was to be seen, but that did not matter to her. She had been up, and could now say she had. Mary Robinson could no longer swagger about at school as the only girl who had been up the Eiffel Tower. After lunch, on the first day, I suggested going to the Louvre.

"What is the Louvre?" asked Ethel.

"The Louvre is a picture gallery," said I, "and there is a big hotel also called by that name, and the largest shops in Paris."

"Oh, the shops! Let's go there!" said Ethel.

But Ethel came after all to see the works of art, and was much impressed by the Venus of Milo, giving her ungrudging approval to the

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principles of hygiene demonstrated by that famous beauty's waist.

Just as we were leaving Paris there came a letter from Ethel's mother, with Ethel's "School Report" for the preceding term. I was amazed at this report. I cannot be too thankful for having seen it; for had I not done so, I might have parted from my niece thinking her the most ill-educated young person I had ever met; but I was now happily saved from falling into such an error. To my astonishment I learned that Ethel not only occupied a high place in the school, but was "first" in history, "first" in literature, and "first," it need hardly be added, in the Shakespere class, besides taking a good place in mathematics.

This quite took my breath away. With the "Report" was enclosed a dry little note from Ethel's head-mistress, in which she much regretted that her favourite pupil was losing so much valuable time in travelling, when she should have been working at chemistry and algebra. Chemistry and algebra! Were these

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then to be the only food of life! Poor Ethel! mentally starving in the midst of plenty!

And after all, if girls are now far above the simple pleasures and interests that contented their parents, if $x+y$ and N_2O are the only subjects in which they take delight, then why did Ethel leave behind, first, her book of mathematical examples in a boat at Lugano, and, secondly, her chemistry volume in the Alpine meadow—and then show so very little concern at their loss? That is a mystery I cannot unravel.

But, making all due allowance for Ethel's deficiencies (and I own that the fault was mostly mine for not accepting her as she was, and in yearning for more than she had to give), still, there must clearly be something wrong with the new system. I would not wish to impugn the wisdom of Ethel's schoolmistress, who must doubtless know more of girls' needs than I do, but I cannot help feeling it a pity to cram their minds so tightly with dry facts, and to make them take up so many subjects, that no room is left for "human nature's daily food." This new system of education makes

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most girls into prigs. It could not make Ethel a prig, but it spoiled her. It had given her a mental surfeit or fit of indigestion. Her mind was like a slate on which so much had been written as to leave no room for new impressions.

Times are changing, and views of education with them. On this subject I cannot believe that the last word has as yet been said. Even taking the chemistry, mathematics, Latin, &c., into account—the teaching that is equal to “eton, winchester, and harrow”—who shall say that our girls have altogether improved?

(Ethel is not looking over my shoulder to criticise this remark: I should not dare to make it if she were.)

I look back upon past years and wonder if after all, in this as in other things, it is not true that “the old is better.”

II

SHADOWS

*" Yet ah, that spring should vanish with the rose !
That youth's sweet-scented manuscript should close !
The nightingale that in the branches sang !
Ah whence and whither flown again, who knows ! "*

MAMIE was dying.

In the pretty, peaceful room, opening on to the garden, amidst all the delightful sights and sounds of summer, Mamie had to die.

Only seventeen years old, poor Mamie ! with all her pleasures and joys and hopes like the Fata Morgana, a delusive dream, never to be realised : missing

" Honour, labour, rest,
And the warmth of a babe's mouth
At the blossom of her breast."

At the foot of Mamie's little bed her mother sat, with bowed head ; beside her was a grey-

Shadows

robed sister from the nursing home; hardly a sound broke the June stillness.

Mamie did not want to die: she wanted very, very much to live. She enjoyed life; she liked going out to dances and parties; she liked being admired; she liked being thought clever; she wanted to grow up to be a great genius; but, above all, she wanted to win the prize in her examination. She had worked *so* hard for it, and had thought of nothing else for so long: it did seem hard that she should die before she could get it.

The tassel of the window blind, waving gently to and fro, made a pattern of light and shade on Mamie's bed; her fingers played restlessly with the sheet—Oh! how tired she was of that particular pattern! How long, how long it seemed that she had been in bed! Many, many days—first days of pain, fever and tossing to and fro, days when she knew she had been cross and fretful to everybody—and now only weakness and feeling oh! so tired.

The light from the garden flickers and fades; Mamie opens her eyes again; a grey-headed Doctor is standing by her bed; he

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looks grave; he seems to be talking to somebody.

"Has the class-list come out yet?" asks Mamie, rousing herself. She asks this question regularly every day. "No? then perhaps you can tell me—tell me the principal exports of Bombay? and I can't, no, I never *can* remember the name of the capital of the Isle of Wight."

Mamie relapses into a doze. "Over pressure," mutters the Doctor, holding her thin little wrist. Somebody in the room seems to sob.

Now it is darkness again—Mamie does not know how long she has been asleep. Some one—the Sister—is giving her a drink. Mamie does not want anything; she only wishes they would leave her alone.

Why are the birds awake so early? Ah, it is morning again. Mamie is always glad when it is light enough to count the row of bottles on the shelf—anything but that tiresome pattern of the blind on the bed. Oh that ugly blind! But some one draws it up, and "visions of the world appear" from outside; the delicious scents of June float in through

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the French windows from the lawn there. A little sparrow hops in, impertinently chirping. Mamie turns her head to watch him. Happy little sparrow! *he* has not got to die yet.

"Shall I read a psalm?" says a soft voice. It is the Sister. Mamie does not answer. She is so tired, tired; and it makes her head ache to think. She listens mechanically:

"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty; they shall behold the land that is very far off."

Can that be the Nurse reading? and how far distant her voice sounds! Mamie raises her eyes and sees—not the far-away country, but the sweet mystic eyes of the Child in the arms of the Sistine Madonna, watching her from across the room. "Poor Mamie," the Child seems to say—so wistful are His eyes, so divine His pity.

Mamie looks at the Child, and she feels that it will understand her. Has she worked so hard, all these years, for nothing? Is she to lose the prize just as it is within her grasp. What then was the use—what was the use of it all? Mamie had made such plans for the future; she was to be beautiful, clever, a genius,

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—yes, the greatest genius the world had ever seen. Every one would be proud of her—every one would love her—ah! how charming and how great she would be—and now this was the end of it all! What was the use, indeed?

Mamie tosses restlessly to and fro; her spirit “flutters and fumes for breath;” her poor little white soul cries out against extinction. Is that the Doctor again? Who said “no hope”? Yes, yes, there *shall* be hope. Mamie *will* live.

“When thou goest through the darkness I will be with thee.”

Ah yes, Mamie wants some one with her in the dark. She has always been afraid of the dark—who was that sobbing? Mamie tries to ask, but she cannot speak; with all her strength she cries in her heart for life. And the divine Child in the picture seems to bend forward and say, “Poor Mamie, you shall live. You shall see that Life itself is only sorrow. Go to sleep and dream.”

And Mamie falls asleep, and dreams.

It seems to her that she is well and strong

Shadows

again. Her cheeks are rosy; there is light in her eyes and lips. She will not trouble about learning or examinations any more. They are empty after all. That is not what life was given for. No, she will live, and love. Since she must marry somebody, she will marry Tom—it is easy to choose—since so many boys have said they liked her. They walk about the meadows hand-in-hand and are happy. Then they are married, and the organ is played in church, and Mamie has pretty frocks, and every one kisses her. The frocks are really nicer than Tom is. Tom does not seem always so nice after they are married as he was before. Sometimes they quarrel, sometimes Mamie cries, and her pretty eyes are red. And a faint shadow gathers at the end of the room, and rolls slowly towards Mamie. And Mamie knows it is the Shadow of Disappointment. And the Shadow passes, but it leaves two little wrinkles on Mamie's pure white brow.

“Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is Vanity.”

Whose was that voice in serious monotone? Is it the nurse? No, Mamie has no nurse.

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. . . She is well and strong. . . . But time goes on, and now Mamie has a baby. A little, dear, soft baby who cuddles up to her and croons, with blue eyes and fluffy, golden hair like the angels. Oh! how Mamie loves the baby. She clutches it tightly, she holds it to her breast, she opens her little frilled nightgown—ah, poor little breast, so wasted and thin! The baby cries; it is hungry. Ah, take it away, it is heavy, Mamie feels too weak to bear it.

Some one moves forward and gently lifts a pillow which was weighing on Mamie's arm. . . . Mamie breathes more easily. And looking into the dim distance, she sees another shadow roll slowly up towards her. And Mamie knows it is the Shadow of Suffering. And it leaves two more wrinkles on Mamie's brow.

But again the time goes by, and now Mamie has grown sedate and serious. She no longer runs and skips and laughs, but she sits all day and knits in a big garden-chair, and the cat sits at her feet. Her hair has grown grey, and the pretty wavy curls have vanished from her head. . . . Now Mamie begins to feel old and tired—

Shadows

oh, so very, very tired—almost so tired that she does not want to live any longer. And Mamie sees a third shadow draw slowly up out of the void and roll towards her. And the shadow leaves many wrinkles on Mamie's brow and crow's-feet round her eyes. And Mamie knows that it is the Shadow of Old Age.

*“ My days are like a shadow that declineth ;
and I am withered like grass.”*

Still the same insistent voice ! Mamie opens her eyes, and sees the grey-robed Sister by her bedside. Ah ! she has been dreaming. It was the Child in the picture that made her dream . . . she remembers it now. . . . How much better she feels ! She will get up. How pleased the Doctor will be when he comes this evening. Oh yes, and the examination ! Surely the post will bring news to-night. “ Mother, has the letter come yet ? ”

But Mamie does not see how a deeper shadow than any creeps up silently out of the gloom. And the Sister reads on :—

“ And Behold, a throne was set . . . and One sat on the throne.”

Mamie sees a great white throne, and herself

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sitting on it. She seems to be without her body, and yet of it ; she feels suddenly strong and well. A sea of faces surges beneath her ; a roar of voices ascends to her : " Mamie's first ! Mamie's first ! " they all cry.

" Oh, mother, mother," she cries, with a great, glad shout : " I'm first in the examination ! I'm first ! "

But the shadow comes up silently, surely, and blots out for ever the gay, kind world. Mamie's head falls back ; the little rippling, fair curls on her temples grow damp ; her little hands clutch at the quilt. . . .

" Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

The nurse reads. But Mamie does not hear. The fourth shadow, the Shadow of Death, hangs over her.

" She's going," the nurse says quietly.

" Mamie, Mamie," cries the poor mother, " speak to me. Listen, listen," (with a sob) " the letter has just come, and *you* have got the prize ! "

But Mamie has passed away from the World of Shadows to the Land that is very far off.

III

ON THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS

"TOPSY!" Miss Ophelia would say, when at the end of all patience, "What does make you act so?"

"Dun no, missis — 'spects 'cause I'se so wicked!"

"I don't know anything what I shall do with you, Topsy!"

"Law, missis, you must whip me. . . . I 'spects it's good for me. . . . I'se so awful wicked there can't nobody do nothin' with me. . . . I 'spects I'se the wickedest crittur in the world."

This familiar illustration of Topsy's elasticity of temperament would seem to bear out the poet's remark that "The heart of childhood is all mirth"; but Mrs. Beecher Stowe's negro child was probably exceptional, and even

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Keble's facts are not always to be implicitly relied on. Many poets, philosophers, and wise-acres have indeed assured us from time immemorial that "childhood is the happiest time." But poets tell us also that spring is mild and balmy; we know it to be a season of east winds and general cheerlessness. Neither is the spring of life necessarily bright. If carefully nurtured, tended, and guarded, childhood may seem the happiest time; but what of childhood neglected, thwarted, misunderstood? Who feels small griefs so deeply as a child? His sorrow may be shortlived, but it is tenfold more agonising than the grown person's, because the child, from his short experience, cannot apply the faculty of reason and argue that, "It will be better to-morrow." To him sorrow seems endless, eternal. Those who speak assuredly of "childhood's happy hour," forget that happiness depends to a large extent on health and on temperament as influenced by surroundings. Temperament, of course, has the greatest share in children's happiness. Topsy made herself at home where Jane Eyre would have been miserable. Compare the

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scene between Miss Ophelia and Topsy with this where Mr. Brocklehurst (the "black marble clergyman") catechises Jane.

"'No sight so sad as that of a naughty child,' he began, 'especially a naughty little girl. Do you know where the wicked go after death?'

"'They go to hell,' was my ready and orthodox answer.

"'And what is hell? Can you tell me that?'

"'A pit full of fire!'

"'And should you like to fall into that pit, and to be burning there for ever?'

"'No, sir.'

"'And what must you do to avoid it?'

"I deliberated a moment; my answer, when it did come, was objectionable: 'I must keep in good health, and not die.'"

Jane Eyre, we may hope, was as exceptional in her precocity of misery as Topsy assuredly was in her happy elasticity. Children such as Topsy would be happy under any system of education; and under any system children such

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as Jane Eyre would be miserable. Systems must be made for the general run, not for exceptional cases. But surely all will agree that the first object of any system of education for the young should be to nurture the happy animal nature of the child. A young child should be happy, just as a kitten is happy gambolling in the sunshine, after a plentiful breakfast in a well-cared-for home. And indeed the majority of children resemble the kitten in being mostly animal; for their bodily needs being satisfied, their minds as a rule do not yearn unduly for food. "What are you thinking of?" I asked a small child of six the other day; she was swinging her legs contentedly on a gate-post. "I'm thinking of nuffin' at all," she said. "Thinking!" cried her sister (of seven) with great contempt; "why we never think a bit!" The greatest mistake in the education of children in a past generation was that the happy animal side of their nature was not sufficiently cultivated; and that under the influence of the doctrine of original sin, parents and guardians were too prone to encourage the morbid tendencies.

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"The heart of a child is bound up in iniquity," was Mr. Brocklehurst's theory, and on this comforting assurance the training of the old school was based. To children approximating to the type of Topsy this did little harm. They said, "I'se wicked," and thought no more about it. Hell fire, devil, unregenerate natures and all were shaken off them as water from a duck. But though Jane Eyre herself was, as we have said, an exaggerated type, most children have a germ of Jane Eyre, as we may call it, which is capable of rapid development under certain conditions. The curse of the old system of education lay in this, that it was precisely calculated to develop this morbid taint. There were many little unfortunates who will bear the scars of their early training to the grave with them. To them, as to Jane Eyre, "It gave their nerves a shock, of which they feel the reverberation to this day." Let us take an instance from authentic experience.

Patty was a London child, born of sufficiently prosperous parents about forty years

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ago. She was small, sensitive, delicate, and her little life was made a penance to her by her fond parents and the old nurse, who idolised her. Grievances of all imaginable kinds were common with Patty. Every night she lay awake confessing to nurse (poor little sinner of six) temptations that would have done credit to John Bunyan. "Nurse," she would say when put to bed, trembling in every limb, "come and sit beside me. The devil is sitting grinning at me in that corner; do you know what he's tempting me to do?" "No, my lamb—what?" the person addressed would reply sympathetically. "He's tempting me to pray to him." "Oh, shocking," says nurse. Patty might perhaps go to sleep at last with nurse's hand in hers; but on the next night the same scene would be recommenced, with a slight variation. "Nurse, I'm tempted again." "Tell me, my pet," returned the Mentor by the bedside. "I'm tempted to pray to the Virgin Mary." "Oh, horrible, frightful!" says nurse—this latter temptation occurring to her as infinitely the more shocking of the two.

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Patty also saw faces in the dark. Many things combined to keep her awake at night: sometimes it was listening for the "last dread trump" (for which nurse had told her she must always be ready); sometimes it was the idea of eternity. "A long, long thread, perhaps, but it *must* have an end," Patty revolved in her dazed little brain. But alas! though this had been the stumbling-block of many of the wise and prudent, it was not revealed unto her.

Patty read regularly with nurse every morning. Nurse's favourite book for week-days was a small work entitled *Cobwebs to Catch Little Flies*, being a series of conversations, in words of three letters, between a certain Mamma, Frank, and Ann. The opening conversation is adorned by a cheerful little vignette of a child's funeral; and upon Frank's asking, "Mamma, why did the boy die?" Mamma answers, "It is for sin," and proceeds further soothingly to remark, "The end of sin is woe in the pit."

But, strange to say, this gloomy little work had a fascination for Patty, just as the

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Bewick, with its quaint woodcuts, had for Jane Eyre. On Saturday night it, as well as the gayer and more mundane picture-books, was systematically put away, not to reappear till the Monday morning. It is sad to reflect that, owing to this and other reasons, Patty perfectly hated Sunday; it seemed to cast its gloom over at least half the week. She did not like going to church; her "bad thoughts" (that is, her temptations) beset her there more than ever, having there, so to speak, a free field. Tormented by her morbid fancies poor Patty would absently hold her book upside down, thereby exposing herself to her nurse's or mother's reprimands. "Nurse," Patty would say, after a long morning thus passed in mental agony, "Nurse, supposing a 'bad thought' *knocks at the door* of my heart, it isn't my fault, is it?" "Listen to your conscience," said nurse, "your own conscience will tell you when you're in the wrong."

Poor Patty! Often and vainly she listened. Nurse had told her it was "a still, small voice," and she expected to hear it speaking inside her.

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Patty's own particular nursery bookshelf consisted of the following books:—*Accidents of Childhood* (graphically illustrated), *Mental Improvement*, *Cobwebs to Catch Little Flies*, *Reading without Tears* (blotted with many), *Little Henry and his Bearer*, *Stories on the Commandments*, *Moore's Tales for Young Persons*, *The Guilty Tongue*, *The Lady of the Manor* (a work for young ladies on the eve of Confirmation, in seven vols.), *The Fairchild Family*. Downstairs, in the library, she had occasional access to a lovely illustrated edition of *The Arabian Nights*, filled with delightful genii—over which she spent many a happy hour—and *Æsop's Fables*; to say nothing of a small *Pilgrim's Progress*, with quaint woodcuts, one of which showed Ignorance writhing in the familiar hell-fire. Patty always pitied poor Ignorance—his fate seemed so very hard on him.

Patty wrote poetry and stories, secretly, daringly, on old scraps of paper, hiding them behind the jam-pots in the nursery store-cupboard. It was a dear, a stolen pleasure. Probably no one would have objected, but the

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child's training encouraged her romantic and secretive bent. And she did not even confess these things to nurse at night ! Her stories were not at all modelled after the style of the books in her library. Even at the tender age of seven, Patty possessed enough knowledge of human nature to know that little girls did not talk like this :—"SELINA : 'How happy are we, my dear sister, to have such a fine house, and such kind parents, who train us in the ways of virtue, and care in every way for our well-being.' MARTHA : 'You are right, my dear Selina, and we ought indeed to be grateful, and to do our best to supplement their wise endeavours with regard to us.'"

Patty's father and mother were tenderly anxious about their only child, and they passed for quite devoted parents ; but in those days children only descended in their best frocks, for an hour or so after tea, and Patty's chief confidante was her old nurse. Nurse was kind-hearted, though a strict Calvinist and a rigid Sabbatarian. She would never allow Patty to run or jump on Sundays, and once, when the child was playing with two sticks, said reprovingly, "Don't cross them ;

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I never could abear to see anything in the form of a cross." This good woman's favourite text was, "The devil walketh about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." She would put a terrible emphasis of her own on the word "roaring."

But, notwithstanding the devil, and nurse's strictness, Patty infinitely preferred her nursery to "downstairs." The drawing-room was always rather alarming to her. There might be visitors, and besides, she hated a clean, starched frock, and the ribbons that tied up her evening sleeves irritated her skin. I remember two little girls, to whom, though they were the youngest members of a large and happy family, the bare thought of "going into the drawing-room" was terrible. "*They* will be in there," they said below their breath; *they* referring merely to their mother and sisters.

Patty's gloomy faith made her superstitious. She was a good child, but good and naughty children were alike superstitious in those days of the supremacy of the devil in religious teaching. They looked carefully under their beds every evening, said the Lord's Prayer

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backwards to keep off evil spirits, and would not have looked in the glass when alone at night for anything that could be offered them.

Patty's nurse told her that if she looked in the glass too much she might see another face—that of Satan himself—reflected in the glass behind her. This was quite enough to nip any budding vanity on Patty's part. A little boy of our acquaintance once (a very naughty little boy to be sure) used, when twilight came on, to go in terrible fear of the devil fetching him. At night, when sent to bed, he trembled to climb the dark staircase alone, and as a defence he used to recite the following lines:

“ Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”

He said this every night as he walked upstairs, swaying his small body from side to side with a rhythmic motion. Only thus, he thought, was he safely guarded through the powers of darkness.

People sometimes said to Patty, “What a happy little girl you must be! Make the most of childhood, for you will never be so happy

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again!" But the child did not believe a word of this. She longed to grow up, planning many things to do and to be in that happy far-off time, when no daily readings, no Scotch catechism, no everlasting services were to be got through. Patty did not long much for heaven. It did not seem to her to be at all an inviting region; for nurse's favourite hymn described it as a place,

"Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths never end,"

which was decidedly suggestive of cramp in the legs.

Patty's parents, we repeat, were devoted to her, and nothing was further from their hearts than any unintentional unkindness. But they did not understand "the physical basis of life." They ought to have taken Patty to a doctor for her "temptations," and ordered a course of cod-liver oil for her "dreams." Cod-liver oil, of course, cannot quite cure all our ailments of body and mind; but it may go a long way in that direction. We ourselves, who are but "children of a larger growth," are we not

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amenable to the same influences? "Grown-up people are never naughty," a child once plaintively remarked. Alas! we are too often very "naughty"; only we mostly call our naughtiness disease, and treat it accordingly. The pity is that this doctrine of the physical basis of "naughtiness" was not applied in the older generation to the education of children. There was sound science, as well as good sense, in that epigram which Martial addressed to a too strict schoolmaster. "Put away your stick," he said, "and your other implements of punishment. If you teach the children to keep well, you will teach them quite enough."

And these reflections bring us to the contrast afforded by the "nerve-system." Of this also let us take an authentic example. With Patty, a child of the past, we will contrast Connie, a child of the present. Connie is a small girl, now just seven years old, and also, like Patty, an only child. Her parents are no less devoted than were Patty's; her nurse is as faithfully attached. But the difference in training is vast. Connie has the run of the

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house; everywhere she is welcome, and knows it. Sweet as she is, she is almost too ubiquitous. All her teaching and surroundings are bright; no wind is allowed to blow in her direction too roughly; the word "devil," such a bugbear to poor Patty, conveys no meaning to Connie. Nay, she has but a hazy notion even of the good spirits. Under the modern system it is thought better to "leave children's minds more or less of a blank" on these subjects. The modern child "does not think a bit." Connie was being shown the other day (her parents, by the way, belong to the orthodox church) a book of Doré's illustrations to the *Paradiso*. "What's that?" she asked, pointing out one of the artist's well-known, cloudy and theatrical forms. "It's an angel." "What is an angel?" inquired the child, with a puzzled look. "It's a thing that flies." But Connie only caught the last word. "Oh, flies!" she murmured contentedly, thinking doubtless that the reference was to the insect. So far from lying awake at night with puzzling thoughts of Death and Eternity, Connie is perhaps too comfortably sceptical. She was

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passing a graveyard the other day, laid out with the flat stones of an older fashion: "Well," she remarked, with an air of pleasant conviction, "I don't see how ever people can get up from under *them*."

But Connie is sheltered in this present world, as well as from all terrors of the future. Even her nursery milk is carefully warmed before she is allowed to drink it. When it becomes necessary to extract one of her small teeth, gas is administered, for it would never do for her to suffer the least pain. She is swathed up to her neck and wrists in lambs'-wool, and would have stared at poor Patty's short sleeves and red, rough arms. No morbid fancies afflict her; if they did she would promptly be taken to see the family doctor. If she is naughty, it means that she is "below par" and must take a tonic. We will leave for a moment the question whether this more comfortable system of education is at all points advantageous; but decidedly Connie's would be voted a pleasanter child than Patty.

The same contrast appears in Connie's library. Her nursery bookshelf contains, be-

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sides innumerable picture-books, the following volumes, brightly and tastefully bound.—Several volumes of Harper's *Young People*, as many of *Little Folks*, *The Child's Garland of Verses*, *The Baby's Opera*, *The Comic Sandford and Merton*, Mr. Andrew Lang's *Red Fairy Book*, *Prince Prigio*, and Leech's pictures from "Punch." If Connie could go back three decades and find herself suddenly confronted with Patty, she would not in the least understand her. Repression on the one hand, freedom on the other, work out to such a different result. Connie would think Patty prim, tiresome, and stupid; Patty would look down upon Connie as merely a silly baby.

For the child of the past the world was a universal class-room; for that of the present it is an all-prevading nursery. We once taught our children to live up to us; now we do our best to live down to them. A century ago John Wesley showed the prevailing idea of the education of children in the boarding-school which he established at Kingswood, where he ordained that "There was to be no play, for

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he who plays when he is a child will play when he becomes a man. Every child was to rise at 4 A.M. and spend an hour in private reading, meditation, singing, and prayer. Every Friday, as the fast-day of the Church, all the children, whose health would bear it, were to fast till 3 P.M., and there were to be no holidays—no, not a day." Patty, though not educated in the Kingswood school, yet owed many of her sufferings in after-life to her early Calvinistic training. She has long ago "grown up," but her morbid taint is ineradicable. It more or less embitters her life. But Connie has not grown up yet, and she must remain therefore, so to speak, an "undetermined quantity." Decidedly there were grave errors in the prevailing methods of bringing up children in the past. But it will only be in the next generation that we shall be able to tell whether we have escaped the opposite error in bringing up the children of the present.

The results of the ideal education, avoiding the extreme on either side, are those laid down by Wordsworth as "the education of Nature:—"

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"Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse ; and with me
The Girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs ;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things."

There was little chance for Patty to be "sportive as the fawn," when the burden of her education was that "the world is very evil." She grew too much "in shower," too little "in sun." But can we be quite sure that petted Connie, reared as it were in a domestic hot-house, will acquire either "the vital feelings of delight" or "the breathing balm,"

" . . . the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things ? "

IV

THE NEW CHILD

A CERTAIN story-book has recently been commended to public notice, on the ground that it has been "read and much liked by Dorothy Drew."

Now, with all due respect to the ex-Premier's little grand-daughter, and waiving the question as to whether or no children should undertake the office of reviewers, we submit that the world is not only in danger of being governed by the New Woman, but by a still later and yet more tyrannical product—the *New Child*.

Yes, "the old order changeth, giving place to new," and the child has changed with all else. It has, for one thing, grown up with alarming rapidity—or else is equally alarmingly precocious. The Apostle stands corrected, for children do not need nowadays

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to be told to "put away childish things." What contented their grandfathers—nay, aunts and uncles—will no longer content them. They love what we, in our youth, hated; what we regarded as penances are by them esteemed as delights. We loathed notice, they love it; we escaped anywhere—even under the bed—to avoid publicity; they court it. We were shy; they are self-satisfied.

All this change of feeling is, naturally, more brought about by the elders than by the children themselves. Yes, it is the elders who are mainly responsible for the New Child. They have produced, like Frankenstein, this "mystical monster," which neither belongs to youth nor to age. The New Child deceives the uninitiated; it would have deceived even Herod himself; for it is, as the Scotch say, "neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring."

We have wandered far from the ways of the "child quellers" of old times, such as the immortal Mrs. Pipchin. Peace be with their ashes! The child-spoiling tendencies of late years have had their natural result. There is, at the present day, a love of immaturity *quâ*

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immaturity. Hence our craze over "infant prodigies" of both sexes. The people, who crowd to hear little Konrad Kozzunski play a polonaise of Chopin's at eight years old, would not go to hear him play the same piece much more perfectly a few years later; all his glory would have departed. Corney Grain's witty allusions to this craze, and his suggestion that he should himself don a white frock and pink sash, were not without cause. And then the "recitations" that the Modern Child indulges in! Even in the theatre little squeaky voices and midget children are quite the rage—while on private stages—! How far away are the times when—perhaps to celebrate some Christmas gathering—the trembling little boy or girl would be forcibly "stood up" to recite "My name is Norval," or "Oh call my brother back to me," quaking and perspiring the while with fear. Nowadays our degenerate offspring rather like this sort of thing; but then, they would not recite "My name is Norval." No, they would soar to the highest flights, and probably give us, say, "The Flight of the Duchess," or "Sister Helen." The New Child

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is always before the public; like the poor, he (or she) is always with us. "Coming out" into society can hardly be any novelty to the modern maiden; the difference is only one of degree, for children's dances every year grow in splendour. When we remember the days of our youth, and recall the victimised feeling with which we went to a party—the stodgy little boys, with faces of abject misery, who asked equally unhappy little girls to dance, and then generally came "a cropper"—we marvel at the change. Dancing lessons, too, that were once a penance, are now a pleasure—and why? Is it merely that the dancing-mistresses do not stamp on the juvenile toes as much as formerly, or force them, tottering, into the ungainly attitudes called respectively, if we remember rightly, first and fifth position; or is it simply that the New Child feels with the quick intuition of childhood, that his audience is now in sympathy with him, whatever it may have been in the past? and it is thus, that

"with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part."

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No one is so quick to hear and see as children. Their receptivity is wonderful. They receive impressions as a slate on which nothing has yet been written. Therefore it is we ourselves, we see more and more, who are to blame for the New Child. For the sad thing is that the New Child has learned evil as well as good. Emboldened by well-meant praise, the modern infant now holds nothing sacred. It is like the Eclectic painters of the Renaissance; it becomes, as Leonardo da Vinci says, one of nature's grandchildren, not one of her children. It rushes at conclusions before it has mastered the reasoning, or gone through the preliminary discipline. And the penance the New Child pays for this haste is that it loses its own natural grace of expression, and gains nothing in return but the ill-fitting graces of its elders which suit it as well as fashionable clothing suits the untutored savage. It is really startling nowadays to hear a child state some profound truth, the perception of which has perhaps cost us years of bitter experience. We are not here objecting to children of genius—far from it; what we do object to is their new

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and ill-fitting sense of responsibility. Lilies of the field they ought to be—uncaring for the morrow. Undue seriousness in a child is uncanny, and ought to be treated with a dose of medicine. Our new educational theories make children priggish. And a priggish child is worse than a grown-up prig, for it is a contradiction in terms. But the seriousness is the worst evil, for it is the most widespread. A modern schoolboy of thirteen, having missed a prize for which he was working, lamented to his sister that “his life had been a failure!” Talk of the joy of childhood! Why, children play nowadays at being grown-up men and women. An even worse case was that of a school-girl of twelve, who thought darkly of suicide because her life was “of no use to anybody.” If this happen in the green tree, what will it be in the dry?

The priggishness of the New Child, though often irritating, is a less serious thing. Most children have had it more or less, and they outgrow it in time: in the New Child it is rampant. It is unduly fostered and encouraged, we regret to say, by the everlasting

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"children's pages" and "children's competitions" that every journal now pours forth. Life, from the New Child's point of view, seems to be one long competition. All this fosters their vanity, their love of praise, their ambition. Their letters are published week by week, their pictured presentments are given to an admiring public. What, from the New Child's point of view, can be more delightful?

Dr. Johnson would have said of this, with his accustomed sternness: "Sir," or "Madam, you lay the foundations of endless mischief; you make boys and girls hate each other."

But the competitions go on lustily; every week there are more of them. When we read the terribly stilted and dull effusions poured out in the "children's pages" by the New Child, one is, indeed, tempted to ask, "What becomes of all the clever little children?" Cleverness is here conspicuous by its absence. How disagreeable and how dull the childish letter can become when stilted with arrogance and bounded by conventionality, may be seen from the following, extracted at random (and

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published as prize letters) by one of the many "children's pages" of the day. They are written, as the reader will perceive, to a certain "Minerva"—Minerva being the pet name of the lady who sits at the receipt of custom in these Child's Head-Turning Societies.

From BIRDIE Q., aged eleven.

(Very well spelt throughout.)

"DEAR MINERVA,—I feel I must write and tell you all about our School Prize-giving. It was quite an important affair, for the vicar officiated, and the Countess of —— gave away the prizes. I am quite a little maiden, only eleven last May; and dear mother had warned me not to expect anything. But I had worked hard, and I received the first-form prize—which was pretty good, dear Minerva, was it not? The girl who expected the prize has, alas! not forgiven me for carrying it away from her;—which surely, dear Minerva, shows a jealous spirit; for in this world's battle we must all give and take, must we not?—Your little friend,

BIRDIE Q."

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We do not know what "Minerva" may have felt, but we ourselves have no hesitation in prophesying that "Birdie Q." will come to no good. But now for the next:—

From ETHEL S., *aged thirteen.*

"DEAR MINERVA,—I am writing to tell you and your little readers what a happy day I spent at C—— Castle last summer. To commence with, there were my father, mother, and I (my dear parents say they are never happy unless I am with them). Well, dear Minerva, we lunched at the inn, explored the storied glades, conjured up the dramatic scenes that had taken place within those ancient walls. Oh! too, too lovely were the green lawns, and vistas seen through ancient avenues! The glorious sun sank through billowy purple clouds, and can it have been fancy, dear Minerva, that I seemed to hear the angels' choir behind them?

"I hope, dear Minerva, that you will esteem this little letter worthy of a place in your Children's Page. I have tried so hard—and

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this is the third time, too. Mother says if you don't, she won't let me subscribe to your 'page' any more, for it's not fair to put everybody else's letters in, and not mine. I enclose you my photograph for publication ; but my friends say that it does not do me justice.—Your little subscriber.

“ETHEL S. (aged thirteen).”

History does not relate how the amiable Minerva bore this jibe ; at any rate she showed most Christian forbearance in inserting the letter. Here is another letter from a decidedly older “child” this time—a child, certainly, “in understanding” still :

“SLOCUM-CUM-TEMENS, WESSEX.

“DEAR MINERVA,—I should like to become a subscriber to your Page, and enclose twenty-four stamps and my photograph. I hope you do not consider thirty-nine too old ; but I have *always* wished to join the ‘Children’s League,’ only my parents would never, till now, give their consent. I have constantly longed to see myself in print, and I will try not to be much

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more stupid than the clever children of to-day. I could send you a nice chatty letter every week about our parish teas and mothers' meetings. I have a friend of fifty, who says she is one of your members, so I hope you will also admit me.—Your depressed friend,

“VICAR'S DAUGHTER.”

Here we see the New Child distinctly invading the province of the elderly and unoccupied spinster. But can any one suppose that either “Birdie Q.” or “Ethel S.” were inspired by any other feeling than a morbid and unhealthy craving for notoriety, when they wrote those unpleasant letters to Minerva? What good did the outpouring do them—or rather, what harm? Both Birdie and Ethel would be the better of a good dose of the old *régime*, administered daily—in other words, they both stand in need of what was expressively, if vulgarly, termed, in nursery parlance, “a good smack;” or at any rate, they require to be “shown their places.”

“Birdie Q.” and “Ethel S.” will, perhaps, when a little older, assail that much-enduring

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tribe, the editors of magazines, with effusions such as the following, which was sent the other day to an editor by a little girl of fifteen :—

“DEAR MR. EDITOR,—I have written a novel in three volumes, and if you will take great care of it and not let it get dirty, you may read it. As it is a sycological (*sic*) novel, and I have taken great pains with it, I think you ought to pay me something large for it—perhaps five pounds. I want a new frock, and the money would be nice. I have tried before to write ; but the world is dreadfully unkind to me, and indeed I have sometimes suspected that there is a conspiracy against me. But I thought, Mr. Editor, that *you* would be fair. My life has been of no use up to now, and I am fifteen ; so, dear Mr. Editor, please write soon to your little friend.”

We will now turn our attention from these cultured children to a quite ordinary child's letter of the old *régime*. It is from a country niece of eleven to an elderly aunt in town :—

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“DEAR AUNTIE,—I am sending you some Anemones for your birthday. I want so much to come to London and stay with you—and when I am lonely I think of you, spending your afternoons at the Crystal Palace or at Madame Tussaud's. If you want a companion I recommend you to have dormice; they do not smell a bit, and they are such dears. I am sorry you have not been well, but dormice would cheer you up. We call ours Teeny and Weeny, and we always tell one from the other because Weeny has got a rash on its nose. The dormice come out every night and sharpen their teeth and make a frightful noise. I have been rather ill; I made myself ill with eating toffee, Mother says so. Oh! how I hate it now! I shall never eat it again.—Your loving
KITTY.”

This is a perfectly unstudied, and therefore charming, epistle; but it is not the “New Child” at all. The New Child would know better than to recommend dormice to a middle-aged aunt, or to her imagine her spending her “afternoons at Madame Tussaud's.” No;

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the New Child's letter under the same circumstances, would be something like this:—

“MY SWEETEST AUNTIE,—I do hope your poor head has left off aching. Have you tried bromide? It does mine so much good always. It is a pity that you cannot come to our theatricals, as we might have managed to cheer you up a little! I am to be the Good Fairy; it is the best part, and my dress will be simply lovely. I am sorry you sent me Shakespeare, for I have got quite beyond him; our school form finished him long ago. And the Shelley I can hardly be allowed to read yet; he is not orthodox enough. But we can, perhaps, get the books changed.—Your affectionate niece
GWENDOLINE.’

The New Child, as we have seen, has already been a reviewer; it has also become editor—witness: a certain little Lady —, who has been dubbed admiringly “the youngest editor in the world.” We do not know why extreme youth should be so attractive in an editor; time was when he was revered for his grey

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hairs; but fashions change, and we shall soon, doubtless, have our opinions "formed" for us by editors of eight or nine! Children are certainly qualifying for the post, for they correct us terribly. They are nothing if not instructive. "A is not an article," remarked a child the other day to its mother, who was helping her with her school lesson: "Fancy your not knowing that it's a distinguishing adjective!" We asked a small school-girl the other day if she learned astronomy: "*Astronomy*! of course not! that's an infant's subject," she answered with great contempt. "Have you read Pope's *Essay on Man*?" we inquired lately of a girl of thirteen: "Pope! why, nobody thinks anything of him nowadays," she replied. "Do you know Milton's *Paradise Lost*?" "Oh, we got beyond that long ago." The worst of a childish dictum of this sort is that you feel yourself so absolutely quenched. There is no getting any further in the argument, for no pig-headedness equals the pig-headedness of the very Young Person, in fact, of the New Child. And then he—or she—is never amused with the simple games that used to delight us.

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Modern children are willing to play, if only to please their elders; but they are mildly and politely bored. They are bored with most things. They have twenty picture-books where we had one; none of your garish, crude illustrations, but æsthetic designs; and yet they don't seem to care about them. There is a good story of how an old gentleman, with much toil and trouble, manufactured a large kite for his small grandson. He and another old friend, with the boy, went out to fly the kite. The two old men were deeply engrossed, but the grandson got so bored that he quietly absented himself, and after some time the two old fogies found to their disgust that they had been larking about all alone with a kite, much to the amusement of the passers-by. And another story is of a little girl of eight who said to her mother (an authoress), "Oh, mumsey, why not call your new book 'The Rod of Love'; does it not ring quite pleasantly?" Ah! there is something terribly unchildish about the "New Child." Little Marjorie Fleming, that sweet child whose untimely death Scott mourned, has left more talent behind her

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in those unstudied scraps of letters than, is shown by all the "new school" of childhood put together. But then her charm was that she *was* so unstudied.

"I am now going to tell you the horrible and wretched plaegge that my multiplication gives me you can't conceive it the most Devilish thing is 8 times 8 and 7 times 7 it is what nature itself can't endure. . . . I am very glad that Satan has not given me boils and many other misfortunes. . . . This is Saturday and I am very glad of it, because I have play half the Day and I get money too but alas I owe Isabella 4 pence for I am finned 2 pence whenever I bite my nails. Isabella is teaching me to make simme colings and nots of interrigations peorids commos &c. . . . As this is Sunday I will meditate upon Sencable and Religious subjects. First I should be very thankful I am not a beggar."

This is sweet; and Louis Stevenson also has hit off the true childish spirit in his delightful book, *A Child's Garden of Verses*, especially in this stanza:—

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“ When I am grown to man’s estate
I will be very proud and great,
And tell the other girls and boys
Not to meddle with my toys.”

Neither is this at all like the “New Child,” but it is altogether charming, if a little narrow in its views. And indeed, whatever the vices of children may be, we prefer them to the vices of older people, which the New Child has been accused of having. For our part we prefer a child to *be* a child, and not a weak copy of a grown-up person.

To sum up, the Child of bygone days had to be seen and not heard ; the New Child has to be heard as well as seen. Heard in essays, recitations, society speeches ; seen in endless photographs, posturing in shop windows, smirking at us from out the pages of periodicals. Yes, it is the Children’s Age in more senses than one. In some cases the children are used to reflect the father’s glory, as in a certain magazine we lately saw, which was devoted exclusively to articles by the “Daughters of Great Men.” The “daughters of great men” had at any rate the excuse of their early recollections

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for appearing in print; but a later and more "up-to-date" periodical goes so far as to give us, we see, the portraits of the "Children of Notable People." Truly, we are, as Thackeray has called us, a nation of snobs; but what have our innocent children done that we should make them participators in our national weakness? What has poor little "Hesper A——" been guilty of that she should be portrayed to us in a big sunbonnet, or little "Fergus B——" that he should be exhibited to us in his best lace collar? These baby portraits ought to be sacred to the domestic hearth, and not shown to a cold and unsympathetic outer world. We hope, however, that if this kind of thing continues the children may themselves get too much of it and rebel. In this connection we are glad to note a protest from a little American girl, Miss Clara Clemens (Mark Twain's daughter): "Papa's books," she confesses, bore her. "I haven't read half he's written," she confided to a friend, "and what I have read didn't interest me in the least. I am so tired, too, of being noticed and asked to be introduced and so forth, just because I am the daughter of the great

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American humorist. Papa is the nicest thing in the world as papa; but, oh dear! I do wish he wasn't famous."

When the New Children grow to be Old Children, what a disillusion there will be! They will have left nothing for the end. All the currants in their cake will have long ago been picked out, and only the sodden dough—of an unkind world—left. How much better if, instead of writing to editors, figuring in "prize competitions" and doing, generally very indifferently, the work of older and sadder people—they have romped, frisked, and generally made the most of the

"Sweet childish days, that are as long
As twenty days are now."

The Boy-child, indeed, may yet enjoy the "sweet long childish days;" of him we have hopes; his school-life partly redeems him. The Girl-child is a worse offender, for she is more hopelessly imbued with the spirit of the age. As the boy is father of the Man—so is the Girl—as New Child—the mother of the

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“New Woman.” It is long since Miss Ingelow wrote :

“ I wait for the day when dear hearts shall discover,
While dear hands are laid on my head ;
The child is a woman, the book may close over,
For all the lessons are said.

I wait for my story—the birds cannot sing it,
Not one, as he sits on the tree ;
The bells cannot ring it, but long years, O bring it !
Such as I wish it to be.”

But the New Child has no idea of waiting.

V

THE TYRANNY OF THE MOTHERS

WHILE so much talk is heard about "Revolt-
ing Daughters," there is another side of the
question that is seldom touched upon. The
younger daughters are having it all their own
way; they have revolted successfully against a
tyranny that they have never felt, while the
older generation—the true prisoners—will yet
continue to bear their chains.

If the modern young woman had needed an
argument to turn the scale in her favour, she
might have found it in the existence, if re-
membered, the quiet, uncomplaining existence
of hundreds, nay, thousands of middle-aged
and elderly spinsters who are daily suffering a
very purgatory of discipline and self-denial at
the hands of those who might be supposed to
love them best. They will not rise in their
own defence; but it is necessary that some one
should hold a brief for them. "Children of a

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larger growth," indeed! but still treated as "children in understanding," faded old maids, who may neither share the joy of the young and happy, nor the dignity of the responsible and self-reliant; poor wavering souls, for ever tossed backwards and forwards in a kind of Limbo between two worlds; pariahs and outcasts, yet ever compelled to wear the mask of smiling happiness.

It is these old-maid daughters of elderly mothers who should obtain the world's fullest sympathy. No one gives it them, for who remembers or troubles over the trials of the middle-aged—middle-age, which as Keble says somewhere :

" By no fond wile
Or saving grace is blest."

Our sympathies are all with the young. Yet the young girl, especially the modern young girl, is usually very well qualified to fight for herself, and does not need help so much as her elderly cousins and aunts. She can revolt without any assistance; they need all our encouragement to do so. Her childhood

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has not been repressed; theirs has. She has always been taught to regard herself as the pivot on which the world—at any rate her immediate world—moves; their one lesson has generally been to efface themselves. The sacrifice of Iphigenia was nothing to theirs. The Hebrew maiden, too, was only sacrificed once; these sacrifice themselves anew every day.

Why should the elderly mother lay claim to the very soul of her elderly daughter? Even Frankenstein had no power over the soul of the Being he had created; and the mere fact of having brought a soul into the world is no reason that we should torment it. Rather, one thinks, should we make amends. No person, not even a mother, can be responsible for another's conscience. When the Book is opened, the Soul itself, and none other, will have to make reply, and answer for its lost opportunities.

These elderly daughters, then, are precisely those who should revolt. Here, if in any case, rebellion would be good and salutary. But do they revolt? No, indeed; they patiently bear

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their burden, and leave revolution to the younger generation, who have rarely anything to revolt from. It is a sad, indeed, a pitiable spectacle, to see these gentle ladies, year by year, giving up their lives, their very souls to this Juggernaut of Duty. No one has a right to give up his soul. Nora Helmer said so, but she was born too late. And, besides, her case was not so hard; for her husband was a brute, while the old-fashioned mother is in her way affectionate. And, as everybody knows, the most cruel tyranny of all is that which goes by the name of affection.

But it may be said, "This may be true, but if so, what fools the daughters must be to put up with it! Certainly no modern young girl would submit to it for a moment." Quite so; she would not; but then the whole bringing-up of the past generation tended to foster this submission. It is difficult to change the habits of a life-time, and to learn to be self-reliant in advanced years. The plant that has always clung to the fence would find it impossible to grow alone; and things are not more easy to learn as one grows older.

The Tyranny of the Mothers

It is, very often, precisely those mothers who have succeeded best in the embryonic or Mellin's Food stage of their offspring, who fail most in their respect in after years—just as there are birds who succeed very well with their egg-laying, but are no good at all when it comes to hatching. We can picture this type of mother in all her stages. She was usually exemplary in her children's infancy; she was always perfectly self-satisfied—she did everything by rule—and she had “principles” on the most trivial subjects. As her children grew older, she lost touch with them; when finally they attain years of discretion, she is completely out of sympathy with them. She has kept her self-satisfaction, her narrow conservatism, and has not troubled herself to come out of her groove, or to move with the times. So far from giving her daughters opportunities of marrying, she has often stood in the way of a love affair, from sheer lack of sympathy and intuition. She is so supremely unconscious that mothers owe any duty of this kind to their grown-up daughters, that she has occasionally even snubbed a suitable aspirant, and has,

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indeed, felt quite offended at the idea of one of her children wishing to leave her. She thinks herself a pattern of devotion to her daughters, but in reality she is wrapped round with the most consummate selfishness. In old age, this type of mother is usually sternly disapproving of any fresh departure; "such and such a thing was not done in my day." She will give way to her daughters about minor points—such as riding on the top of omnibuses—but she is adamant itself on other points. For instance, she will on no account permit her daughter (of forty or forty-five) to go out to dinner without the escort—say of a little maid of nineteen or twenty to protect her. If the daughter happen to go out to tea, or for a day's shopping, the mother will insist on her being in by dusk, and if her command be not obeyed to the letter, she will visit the dire offence upon the unfortunate woman as if she were a disobedient little girl of nine. (We have ourselves known a mother—one, by the way, who supposed herself to be a thorough "Christian"—who made the whole house unbearable for two days because her middle-aged daughter had been a

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quarter of an hour late for dinner). If the daughter presume on any occasion to ask a friend to dinner, she will be sternly rebuked, and be told that "no house can have two mistresses." For her own part she has every material comfort; but then, one may live in luxury, and yet one's mind and soul may be starved. She is not allowed to take part in the house-keeping, except by occasional favour; she is expected to have no hobby or occupation in life, save that of being bullied; she has nothing to grind, she must perforce grind herself; and yet people seem surprised when she becomes in time "a mental case." Small wonder it seems to us; for the poor woman, who has reached a time of life when she might very well expect a little peace, has to endure daily frictions and mortifications such as would wear the heart out of the most youthfully sanguine. A slight often hurts more, the smaller it is. There may be a whole tragedy often in a tea-cup; indeed the tragedies of life occur mostly over comparative trifles, such as would make the outer world smile. Petty tyrannies, indeed, are those we have mentioned;

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but none the less tyrannies for all that. The daughters of such tyrants look with envy on the house-servants who are able to leave, and who do so; they know, alas! that such release is next to impossible for them. The iron has eaten into their souls; but (from their point of view) there is no escape possible, till Death remove either the sufferer or the petty tyrant. One daughter, indeed, we recall to mind, who did contrive to escape, at fifty years old, from an almost unendurable bondage; but even with her, custom and convention were so strong, that all her friends had to be brought in to aid and abet the plot, before she could be induced to run away from home.

Of course it is easy to say that in cases like these the daughter must have "spoiled" her mother, or at any rate, "brought her up" very badly. Well, we will own that a daughter—especially in these later days—is more or less responsible for her mother's bringing up; but "spoiling" in this sense may after all arise from an exaggerated idea of filial affection. Then "Why," the world will ask, "should a daughter stay with such a tyrant of a mother?"

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Why not rather seek her own living, and be free?" But one is apt in these cases to forget the great factor of unselfish women's lives. This is "Duty"; and a daughter of forty-five, who has not married, feels it to be her plain duty to stay with her parent at whatever costs. How can she leave a mother of seventy or more to be tended by strangers? An old-fashioned idea of Duty, maybe, and at any rate one that will not much affect the coming generation, but assuredly a pardonable weakness. And it is, therefore, precisely the best women who submit. Also we must remember people who lead sad lives, and even people who do not, get sadder as they get older; their love for the "war-path" dies out; there is less fire, less "divine rage" against injustice, in them than in the young.

Then, lastly, it may be said that the sufferers are sometimes content with their narrowed lives; that they do not yearn to break their bonds; that they do not, indeed, always know that they suffer. This, it seems to us, is the most pathetic case of all.

Mothers like these are not of the majority.

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No, they form but a comparatively small class, still, they do exist; you can probably recall several such out of your own acquaintance. That the majority of—even old-fashioned—mothers are self-sacrificing and devoted, no one can doubt, still this fact does not make us pity less the unselfish daughters of those who are not so. But the worst of unselfishness is, that it always makes somebody selfish. An unselfish mother makes an exacting daughter; an unselfish daughter, a tyrannous mother. It might almost be said that unselfishness is a vice, for it certainly makes vices in others. We remember once that a mother of four middle-aged daughters wept for days and would not be comforted, because the youngest, aged thirty-five at least, was shortly going to be married. The old lady was perpetually sobbing and spreading out her handkerchief to dry, when she ought to have been rejoicing at her daughter's happiness. *Apropos* of marrying; if the daughters marry and, in the natural course of things, start a family of their own, their mothers perforce cease to tyrannise over them; why not therefore cease as it is,

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without their marrying? An old maid of our acquaintance once promulgated the theory that a certain period should be named by all spinsters for definitely abjuring thoughts of marriage, and for receiving the presents from friends which, had they married, would have naturally arrived as wedding presents. It were well also, it seems to us, to fix a day likewise for the cessation of supreme parental authority. Why should a woman of forty be expected to obey like a child?

Naturally, it is only in the well-to-do and moneyed classes that these tyrant mothers exist, as any one can see who notes the sad submission of the old women of the working class, who are "kept" by their children. They seem as if they could hardly be grateful enough for such charity. Some well-to-do mothers, on the other hand, seem to think that their children owe them a perpetual debt of gratitude for being allowed to exist at all. Sir Anthony Absolute's well-known speech to his wilful son was not an unusual one. "I this my reward," we lately heard a mother ask her daughter (a minx of seventeen, who had

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been guilty of some trivial disobedience), "is this my reward for having had you?"

"Well, mother," was the obvious retort, "I'm sure I never wanted you to have me!"

But this was from a "modern daughter"; and the young girl of the present day is, as we said, generally able to fight for herself. She will here say, in self-defence, that she is only revolting "in time" from the possibility of such tyranny as beset the former generation, and this explanation of the question is certainly a plausible one, though, for our part, as long as the tendencies of the nation are what they are, we see very little danger for the liberty of the daughter in the near future. Public opinion sways now this way, now that, on other questions besides politics; and this is distinctly the Day of the Young Person. Perhaps it is too late to free the slaves of a past generation; but if it contribute in any way to brighten the lives of some of these, then the "Revolt of the Daughters" will not have been without its uses.

VI

STAGE-STRUCK

“Miss Morleena de Millefleurs
Undertakes Business,
Comedy Old Women, Heavies.
The Delight of the Intelligent Pit.
On Tour till September.”

“Dainty Little Dora,
Principal Boy. Disengaged for Panto.
‘She wears a Sporting Tie.’
All Business for Dora must be addressed
103 Rosemary Lane, Brixton.”

“The Up-to-Date Girl,
Molly O’Brien.
The Margate ‘Hoop-La’ Dancer.
The Finest High-Kicker Ever Seen.
Going Immense.
She Will Show ‘Em a Little Life.
Resting 40 Portobello Road, East,
With Mother.”

I WAS beguiling the way in an omnibus one Christmas by reading the above and kindred advertisements in the *Era* (I always take in the

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Era for old associations' sake), when, at the corner of Bow Street, a young woman jumped in; a young woman, one would have said, of the respectable dressmaker type, habited sedately, almost to primness, in a neat ulster (it was raining) and a close bonnet and veil. Presently she recognised a friend opposite her, a woman with a baby and a plush mantle. "I've got it, dearie!" she cried, her face beaming with joy.

"What have you got, sweetie?" asked the friend.

"I've got what I wanted. He's made me a thief!" Everybody in the omnibus started; but the young woman went on: "I told 'im I'd give 'im no peace, and as I'd made up my mind to come back an' back till he give me something. And so 'e's give in, dearie, and I'm one of the Forty Thieves at thirty shillin' a week!"

A light broke in upon us; it was the Christmas pantomime. But any one less like one of the Forty Thieves than the neat young woman beside me could hardly be imagined.

But how stupid it was of me not to have guessed who my friends were before! The "dearie" and the "sweetie" ought to have told me

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at once. Ladies of the profession invariably use these endearments, and very little they sometimes mean. I speak from experience, for it was once my privilege, for the space of a year, to join a company of strolling players. For a time it was advisable that I should earn my living, and the stage seemed to be the most attractive means of earning it. My expectations on this point were, I may now say, not entirely realised; but at the time I assuredly intended that they should. I had recited and acted at school, and the girls had always applauded my efforts. Being a successfully revolted daughter I had not much difficulty in getting my own way. I did not change my name, and I put no advertisement into the theatrical papers. I got, somehow, an introduction to a provincial manager, who, after some demur, agreed to take me at a nominal salary at first. Then I had to provide a wardrobe. To this end a friend who was in the profession took me in hand, and together we visited many cheap sales, and all sorts of curious haunts and bye-ways off the Strand. The first thing we did was to buy large quantities of sham jewellery and beads in

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Bow Street: I had no idea before that sham jewellery was so indispensable an adjunct of the actor's art. One of my parts, I remember, was to be a Rebel Queen, a queen with little to do or say, but still a queen. To denote sovereignty my friend persisted in adorning me with brass curtain-fasteners, "bosses," and mock pearls, till I must have resembled Mrs. Merdle's shop-window. For another dress she insisted on decorating me with stiff white satin rosettes. "It will give the dress character," she said approvingly; and certainly if character in costume depends on rosettes, my dress, when finished, must have been a part in itself. Then we laid in many pounds of coloured glass bugles, and a conservatory full of the very cheapest kind of artificial flowers, which were to fill any blanks that might occur in the bugles and the rosettes. Next we bought several wigs of divers colours, and made a visit to a select and mysterious female pawnbroker who lived up many winding stairs, somewhere, I think, among "the dusty purlieus of the law." This lady appeared to buy wholesale from the aristocracy, or, rather, from their maids, and retail at half-price. She

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seemed to do an uncommonly good business. Her room was lined with closely-filled chests; some of the dresses were hardly worn, and all extremely elaborate.

"You're just exactly the build of the Countess of X.," said this lady to me, with a persuasive smile. "'Ere's a box full of her dresses. I think she's per'aps too fond of trimmin' to suit you altogether, but we can alter that a bit."

I was exactly "the build" of the Countess of X., and we soon arranged matters. Just as I was going, the lady turned to me, and said amiably: "Been in the perfession long? No? I thought not. Well, I've got a son in it; he does comic songs and dances, the variety line, y'know. I thought per'aps you might come across him; you'd be sure to git on together if you *did* 'appen to meet!"

If bugles and rosettes and "character" could have made me succeed, I ought to have made a great actress; and yet I must confess at once, to my shame, that I never rose to any eminence in the profession; my name was never "starred" in the bills. However, in spite of this

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(or perhaps I may say for that very reason, such is human nature), I was beloved by all.

Our first tour was to last four months, from August till Christmas. Our company, to whom I was introduced on the road, were very friendly. All the ladies travelled together, and all the men by themselves; and our train was duly labelled "The Happy Family Company," which I thought very grand indeed, until I met many other trains similarly labelled. We carried scenery and all with us, for ours was a "Répertoire" company; that is to say, we played different pieces every night. Our leading lady was Agneta Delaval, an experienced provincial actress, of some personal attractions, capable but feline. Then there was Aurelia de Vere (Mrs. Brooks) whose husband was in the company, and who did "second lead" and *ingénue* parts, and was always a little treacherously sweet; and Natalie Brydges, a girl of some ability and of an amiable disposition, but sleepy and with a bad habit of being late for everything; Alice Browne, who did attendants, maids, and anything in that line; and Lilian Evans, a girl

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of twenty, like myself a novice, very pretty and very ambitious—poor girl, there were many troubles in store for her before her ambition was to be satisfied. Then there was Nancy Davis (or “Hop o’ my Thumb,” as we called her, because she was so small), a versatile and clever little person, who did any and every part that might happen to be called for, from a fairy to a page-boy; and there was Miss de Montmorency, who, on the other hand, couldn’t act at all, but stood about gracefully in Greek attitudes, and was generally troublesome and emancipated. Dick Wilder was our manager; we always called him Dick among ourselves, and were generally, except when things upset him very much and he was driven to bad language, on the best of terms with him. The *jeune premier* was Mr. Evelyn de Lisle, a gentleman who has now risen high in the profession. Mr. de Lisle had the good fortune to be beloved by all the ladies of the company, from Miss Delaval to the dresser, nay, even by the very charwomen who cleaned the theatres. Natalie Brydges did indeed pretend indifference, but she was known to be

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eccentric, and besides, nobody believed her. Mr. de Lisle had, it was said, great charm of manner; the charm consisted in his absolute want of manner. Like Mr. Rochester, he was entirely forgetful of other existences but his own, and, figuratively, was much given to wiping his boots on his adorers' dresses. Every one of us quarrelled as to who should arrange his Greek drapery; and he used to come as naturally to us to have his arms powdered for Coriolanus as a child to its mother. He was certainly attractive; there was distinction about his very brusquerie. Tony Blenkins, on the other hand, was not so much adored. He meant well, but was one of the sort who can never speak to a girl without taking her hand, or putting an arm round her waist. I myself always preferred Tony when he was made up for a villain—say, for Shylock. Then there was Scroggins and Martin, who were middle-aged and oppressed by the cares, or at any rate by the consciousness of large and expensive families at home; and there was Willie Fleming, who did weak-kneed Roman soldiers, gaolers, and “the third son of old Sir

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Roland." I have always wondered, by the way, why that member of Sir Roland's household should bear so little resemblance to the rest of the family, being generally feeble in the legs, and husky. Willie Fleming always gave me the impression of having been sent on to the stage by a well-directed kick from the wings. Finally, there was Billy Barlow, a boy of eighteen, who did "third murderers," footmen, and "the mob," and who, like the celebrated Mrs. Grudden, appeared in the play-bills under any and every name that occurred to the manager as looking well in print. I have myself seen Billy act under six different aliases.

I lived, on tour, conjointly with Lilian Evans and Natalie Brydges, and our board and lodging came to about fifteen shillings a week. It is almost impossible to live cheaper than that. Our salaries only ran to about thirty shillings each; so that, though our travelling expenses were of course paid by the management, we did not save much. Mr. Evelyn de Lisle, it was well known, lived always at smart hotels; but we could not all be so grand,

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and most of the company, ourselves included, frequented dingy lodgings down suicidal streets, lodgings that were let to professionals all the year round, with furniture that shed its stuffing, chimneys that smoked, and other drawbacks.

Landladies, that is to say, theatrical landladies, are a study in themselves. The worst type of them may be perhaps dilapidated and addicted to drink; but the best are delightful and original people, with a great turn for dramatic narrative. Their parlours are generally decorated with photographs in costume of the Margate High-Kicker, the Ten Little Niggers, and other ornaments of the profession. They live, indeed, in rather melancholy streets: in one town we were just under a railway arch, in another over a mews, and in a third next door to a public-house, whose wooden spirit cases, piled in a vast heap, nearly blocked up our entrance; but they are always ready to enliven you by their conversation, and two attentions, at least, they never omit: one is to bring a cup of tea to your bedside in the morning, the other to fetch the beer from the public-house

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at night. So well have they become inured to the wants of the profession! Then the visitors' book, a black, commercial-looking volume, filled with large sprawling entries, is a constant joy. On one page you read that "Long Harry, bright Gracie, and little Vick found this house a home." Who was little Vick—the poodle or the baby? Perhaps a second Infant Phenomenon. Then "The Three Slashers found Mrs. G.'s grub excellent." Again, "The Rowdy-Dowdy Swells found this house a Home from Home, and count the landlady and her family among the dearest of their friends." "Which I can't return, axin' their parding," said the landlady on my inquiries; "for the Rowdy-Dowdy Swells—you've come across 'em, perhaps? Well, they're in the nigger line, and of all the dirtiest, noisiest fellers as ever I see,—but there, I always say, I don't 'old with taking niggers in, for it takes pretty nigh all they pay to wash after 'em,—a-dirtyin' all the sheets and a-muckin' everything up with their 'orrid blacking."

"Found this house a Home from Home"; this was the entry that occurred most fre-

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quently, and aroused my curiosity. "What does it mean?" I asked Natalie, who was well versed in theatrical ways. "Oh, it means that the landlady and her children come and sit with you all day, and treat you as one of themselves." It need hardly be added that after this information I carefully abstained from finding any lodging "a Home from Home." Once, indeed, when lodging alone, I had gently but firmly to decline the landlady's suggestion that I should share the parlour with a theatrical gentleman in the music-hall line, just to make it homelier-like for us both. But I was generally on very good terms with my landladies; indeed, one of them in a burst of confidence told me that I was a "real nice sort, with none of that 'orrid side on, like some of 'em, and no aggravatin' ways"; and then she proceeded to tell me how Tony Blenkins had once lodged with her, and how he objected "on principle" to pay twopence a week for "cruets," though he ate whole jars of salt and whole bottles of vinegar with his friends of a night. "They were that fond of salads, 'im and 'is friends; and princerple or no princerple, I ain't a-goin' to be done outer my

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money,—and me that 'as two daughters and a son in the perfession !”

It was curious, by the way, how many of these ladies had, according to their own account, “come down in the world,” and were the defrauded heirs to some great property, or had once driven their “carriage and pair.” One, a dear old lady, was much afflicted at the idea of such young girls as Lilian and myself going on the stage. “Do’ee leave that temptatious perfession,” she would say ; “there’s dears ; now do’ee. You’d far better marry ; now ain’t there any one as you might fix your minds on ?”

The first regular rehearsal awed me mightily. It took me some time to get accustomed to the dim, religious light that only half disclosed the dirty theatre, with the company sitting or standing about, in costumes of varying dinginess, nibbling macaroons or sandwiches. The auditorium was shrouded in darkness ; in front of the stage, near the footlights (only no footlights were lit), sat Dick Wilder, prompt-book in hand, and a kind of seven-branched candlestick flaming behind him, vaguely suggesting an altar. The whole

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impression was so church-like that I quite expected to hear the organ strike up. Near Wilder stood his secretary, a beardless youth but armed with stern authority, who repeated everything Wilder said in stentorian tones, just as the man with the wooden leg did for Mr. Creakle. How alarming it all was at first! We poor trembling wretches who were novices had to act our parts each time, while our more experienced companions simply raced through their speeches. After a while I learned that provincial rehearsals are much more haphazard affairs than London ones, to which they bear much the same relation that a sketch does to a finished picture. In the provinces a play is rehearsed perhaps for a week where six weeks would be required in town. Sometimes, indeed, when pressed for time, Wilder would give us only one day for rehearsal; one long day, sustained only by, perhaps, if we were lucky, a stale Bath bun! And the Provinces have a quite different taste in acting from the Town. They like both their sentiments and their style to be somewhat exuberant. "Keep it up!" Wilder used to cry.

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"Give it out; let 'em have it!" His great horror was always lest a scene should be "let down." Sheer physical force, indeed, was often needed to keep up a scene properly. I remember being cast in one play for the messenger who announces bad news, and my entrance was to bring down the curtain. Mr. de Lisle was playing the hero, and on one occasion, when my voice gave out slightly, he declared bitterly that I had "let the scene down," and lost him "three rounds at least." Actors and actresses are extremely sensitive on the subject of these "rounds." It might be supposed by the uninitiated that one "call" after the scene would be enough; but no, they count eagerly the number of times the curtain is raised, and sometimes as many as six or even eight calls hardly content them.

My first important part was Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*. I was deadly nervous; my hands seemed swelled to twice their usual size with the heat and excitement, the paint would hardly stay on my face, and my throat grew curiously dry and husky. Waiting for your cue at the wings, when you

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are still a novice, is not unlike the uncomfortable feeling you experience when your bathing-machine is being slowly dragged over the grating shingle to the sea, and you sit shivering in very inadequate garments inside. "I can't do it!" I groaned to my Lorenzo, who happened on this occasion to be Tony. "Rubbish," he cried angrily; "buck up!" Tony was usually polite almost to unctuousness, but I never loved him so much as at this moment. He restored my sinking courage, and I actually got a "round."

Our Company was a perfect School for Scandal in the way of gossip. If under the strictest vows of secrecy I breathed a word to Natalie or to Lilian, I was sure to hear of it again next day from Wilder, or from Hoppy, as we abbreviated Hop-o'-my-Thumb. There were occasional spars and jealousies; but, whatever might be said in private, we were usually to outward view most polite and affectionate. There is said to be much insincerity about the stage, but it is so pleasant to be insincere.

"I never myself believe in a woman who calls

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you 'dear heart' in the first week," said Hoppy, and I think she was right. Agneta Delaval and Aurelia de Vere (otherwise Mrs. Brooks) made themselves very sweet to Lilian and me at first; but as we began to get on, when Mr. de Lisle asked Lilian to pin on his Greek drapery, above all when Wilder set her to understudy Aurelia's parts, they changed their tone. Lilian was really made quite miserable. Aurelia and Agneta used to bully her terribly; they did not so much speak *to* her as *at* her (and she had to dress with them too, poor thing!), till I've often seen the tears making pathways down the rouge on her cheeks between the acts. Men are never so odious to one another as women are; they have not such petty ways of bullying; if they quarrel, they give one another a black eye and have done with it. Of course Mrs. Brooks must have known she couldn't play Juvenile Leads for ever. Now, I believe, she plays the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, the landladies in farces, or anything else that comes handy; but she used to give Lilian a very bad time of it then. Mr. de Lisle said it was a shame; but he didn't know how bad it was. When you're dressing

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in the same room with other girls, you can't get away from their tongues.

But we had our little moments of pleasure. There were, for one thing, delightful supper parties, where we used to forget our differences and enjoy ourselves like a lot of children. Mr. Scroggins, or Tony, or Evelyn, whoever was the host of the night, you would meet him in the morning down the town in all the importance of shopping; and at supper-time the table would groan with the most curious assortment of viands conceivable, each of the guests contributing their share. What fun it used to be! It was like nothing so much as the gay undergraduate parties of an Oxford Commemoration. Nobody talked "shop" on these occasions; you would have never so much as dreamed that we had any connection with the theatre.

We were very proud of our Company, which we justly considered very superior to any other, certainly to those we met with on the road. Terrible caravans they were of painted and touzled females with festoons of yellow hair hanging down their backs; depressing trainfuls of frowsy humanity, labelled, as the case might

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be, "The Scarlet Sin Company," "The Blood-Trail Company," or "The Human Vampire Company," with dirty children yelling out of the carriage windows. You could, by the way, always gather the social status of a Company by the number of children it carried in its van. Wilder would never allow a lot of children; he said it made a Company look squalid. We only had one infant in ours, the property of Agneta Delaval, whose husband was touring in another Company, and whose real name was Kate Smith; it was only seen on Sunday journeys with a nurse girl and a dirty white pelisse, and was carefully kept out of Wilder's way. But it was, I remember, once brought on as the infant in a modern comedy. This struck Wilder as a good opportunity for realism; but the baby infuriated Mr. de Lisle, who was its stage-parent, by yelling at a pathetic moment and making the gallery laugh. Indeed, so angry was Mr. Evelyn that he completely forgot his part ("dried up," as they say in the profession); and this was therefore little Miss Smith's first and only appearance. "Why didn't you pick up the brat and stop its crying?" said

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Wilder angrily to Evelyn. "You engaged me to act; you didn't engage me as nurse," retorted Evelyn. "Turn on the moon!" bawled the stage-manager to end the discussion; for a moonlight scene came next, and the quarrel was delaying the play.

Hop-o'-my-Thumb was at first very friendly with Lilian and myself; but she gradually espoused the side of Aurelia and Agneta, the side of superior strength. Hoppy had a great sense of what was fair, and it hurt her feelings that a mere novice should get parts denied to a professional of long standing; she had begun her theatrical career at eight weeks old, as stage-infant in very superior melodrama. She had been born and lived in the profession, which perhaps accounted for her diminutive size. So Hoppy changed sides, and came to regard us with more or less embittered feelings. What nursed the spark almost into a blaze was the fact that at one town Lilian Evans's name had by some oversight been what is called "starred" in the bills. Now, starring is almost invisible to any but professionally jealous eyes, as it only means that the name

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of the actor or actress is printed in infinitesimally larger print at the end of all the others. The starring was doubtless some mistake, provincial programmes being often badly printed; and the catastrophe only occurred when we were playing in a miserable make-shift theatre (a "fit-up" in professional slang) at some wretched little seaside town; but it served its turn. We were sitting in the green-room during a wait, when Hoppy observed quite irrelevantly: "I saw Dick Wilder just now. He said to me, 'Why are you looking so sick, Hoppy?' And I said, 'Isn't it just enough to *make* me sad to see people who can't act a bit raised, and people who have been "Pro's" for fifteen years shunted?'" "It's quite sickening," said Mrs. Brooks, applying the powder-puff viciously; "but money does more than talent nowadays, and some people of course pay hundreds to Wilder just to see their names on the bills." This was an evident hit at us, but as we had paid Wilder nothing we declined to apply it to ourselves. "Such a pity, dear," said Agneta Delaval sweetly to Lilian, "that Wilder should give you parts that suit you

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so badly. The *idea* of your playing tragedy! With *your* face and figure you were *made* for low comedy!" Here the call-boy intervened to rescue us with a summons to Agneta. "I wish Miss Delaval wouldn't trouble herself on our account," I said angrily, for Lilian had tears in her eyes that were very unbecoming the Amazon whose war-paint she bore. "She's got a wonderful sweet manner, any how," said the faithful Hoppy; "and my! she *does* know how to put on her clothes!" "Miss Nancy Ellis," said the call-boy. "Oh, my boots aren't buttoned," cried Hoppy, jumping up (she was playing a page-boy that night) "and, hang it, I've left the button-hook upstairs!"

But one could not seriously be angry with Hoppy. She was so funny, and then she was the same to everybody: "Wilder can't act for nuts," she would say, and she did not think much even of our lion, De Lisle. Hoppy perfectly hated Shakespeare's plays: "I'm sick of them," she groaned, "don't understand a word of them." She certainly entertained views of her own about Shakespearian pronunciation; but then so did many of the others. It is

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my private belief that they didn't understand half their own speeches. I have myself heard Scroggins call a *nuncio* a *unicorn*; and not one of the company, except Mr. de Lisle, could ever pronounce the word *nuptial*, all invariably making it *nuptual*. "When I've finished this tour," Hoppy would say, "I've done with old Shakespeare. I'll go back to melodrama, and have a regular old bean-o! Won't I paint my next comp'ny red, that's all!"

The shopping in provincial towns, which generally fell to my lot, was rather amusing. The tradesmen were so pleasant; and so interested in us. Directly they found that I was theatrical (and they did not take long about it) their manner changed, and they adopted a curious but not unpleasant familiarity; in fact, they treated me as one of themselves. They would discuss the plays with us, and make remarks and criticisms on the actors. Indeed, once, when I had made myself particularly affable over the purchase of two mutton-chops, the butcher's assistant leaned smilingly over the counter, and asked insinuatingly if I were a sister of Miss Tottie Tomkins? I was "jest

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'er stoyle, such a nice easy way with me." After this I thought it prudent to adopt a more frigid demeanour. We used to become very greedy over our small incomes; it was like living on board-wages. I have known Hoppy bully the poultry-shop man one whole morning in order to reduce a ptarmigan from eighteenpence to tenpence. Hoppy was an old hand at bargaining, and the man gave in at last from sheer despair. In my shopping excursions I was always meeting Alice Browne and Miss de Montmorency, arm-in-arm, staring into the windows. They hardly ever seemed to do anything else, unless it were reading penny novels. They rose late, they never studied their parts, and yet when Lilian Evans and I got on, they assured us it was all our wonderful luck. Natalie, on the other hand, deserved better luck than she got; she was the most picturesque girl I have ever seen, with wonderful black hair that fell about her ears something in the style of Rossetti's Venus Verticordia. Mr. de Lisle, I have heard, called her a slut; but then it was well known that he liked people to be very neat; and

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besides (as I have said), Natalie did not worship at his shrine; she was too sleepy for adoration. Miss de Montmorency was of a different type; she was emancipated, and talked about free love; for, though her conduct was as exemplary as the rest of the company's, she liked to be considered a New Woman. She kept a bicycle, and a temper too, I know, for I saw her once reduce our red-nosed laundress to tears because some part of her wardrobe was not forthcoming in time.

Sometimes on off-nights we would visit any rival show that might be going on in the same town. Of course they were always, or we thought so, vastly inferior to our own; but still they amused us, and, besides, they never cost us anything. At one seaside town, I remember some of us visited a wretched little show in a fit-up (about the size of the cabin on the top of Mont Blanc), with an audience of about thirteen, mostly boys and babies. It was a town where, as the local agent informed Wilder, "nothing paid but leg-shows," and where even our show failed to attract much notice. The play reminded one of nothing so

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much as the third-rate amateur performance of bygone days, where the heroine's only idea of emotion was to revolve her arms continually, after the manner of an animated pump; where the villain's only notion of villainy was to make the standard stage-exit, crying "Foiled!" with his cloak over his head; and where the good young man's only way of showing his general benevolence was to claw perpetually at vacancy. The theatre was, besides, so small that the unfortunate actors nearly fell into the footlights; and when they went off at the sides, you could see the wings bulge where they were standing. The prices charged were modest enough, in all conscience, though I did see one wily small boy waiting half the evening at the door in order to smuggle himself in for half-price (threepence). The poor players! But the play gained great applause, for the righteous were duly rewarded and the wicked punished.

"It gets on my nerves," said Miss de Montmorency, at the end of an hour, and we left. This, by the way, is a common expression with theatrical companies; it is wonderful how soon

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you learn it. Besides getting things on their nerves, actors have various other little weaknesses; one is an affection for borrowing, and, indeed, in that respect a company might almost be a Mutual Loan Association. Often have Natalie and Hoppy come to me, almost in tears, to borrow ten shillings, being tied fast to their lodging, imprisoned, in fact, till they could pay the bill which should release them. Another professional weakness is a tendency to superstition. Even a sensible actress, if she happen to break a looking-glass, trembles with fear; should she inadvertently drop the soap in the dressing-room she cries with joy "Work is coming my way!" If she should put on a garment wrong side out, not for worlds will she rectify the blunder, for fear of bringing on herself bad luck.

But, after dropping the soap perseveringly every night for a week, good luck *did* come to Agneta Delaval. She got a London engagement, and promptly threw over Wilder without further parley. Managers are an ill-used race; they have a bad name which they do not always deserve. Considering all things, it is

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small wonder that their tempers are occasionally short: the wonder rather is that they are as good fellows as they are. I remember, in my salad days, asking an actress of some experience what sort of folk managers were to deal with: "My dear," she said impressively, "they're angels if you're making money for them, and they're the very devil if you aren't." However this may be, they certainly are not, as is so often represented, impervious to or jealous of rising talent; like the equally maligned race of publishers and editors, they are quite awake to the value of a good thing when they find it. So many people dabble with the stage nowadays with no intention of taking it up seriously, that no wonder managers are apt to be sceptical of genius in the bud.

"I'm sorry for Wilder," said Lilian, unconsciously drawing Mr. de Lisle's classic profile on a letter she was writing. "I think it's a shame to treat him so." "I'm glad; I can't stand him at all," said Natalie Brydges. She had been called an "old geyser" by Dick that very morning when late for rehearsal, and was still feeling sore about it. "He's had a bad

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notice in this week's *Stage*," said Hoppy sagely; "that's what made him mad with you, Natalie. He thinks there is a conspiracy against him in the Press." This, I may observe, is a favourite delusion among members of the theatrical profession, and' not unknown, I fancy, among artists of other denominations.

Well, I have left the boards, but the profession has left its indelible mark upon me. I am still as stage-struck as Charles Lamb's or Hans Andersen's old ladies. Whenever a travelling company comes within twenty miles of my residence, I immediately set off to see their show. Only last year at Orvieto, a third-rate Italian company was playing in the town, and I inquired duly of the hotel-porter about the performance. He immediately proposed that the head-waiter (who could speak a little English) should accompany me to explain the jokes. Fancy the jokes in *Gentleman Joe* elaborately explained to the foreigner! But had not my plans been suddenly changed, not even this suggestion would have deterred me.

Of my companions on tour all have long vanished from my ken. Some, like Mr. de

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Lisle and Lilian Evans, have risen high above it ; but the other day I chanced in an omnibus (again a Bow Street one) to come upon Hop-o'-my-Thumb and Miss de Montmorency, the former in bright green sleeves and an enormous feathery hat, the latter with her hair as usual emancipated, and both with their dogs-eared prompt-books. "Have you heard," I could not resist saying, "of Lilian Evans's good fortune? She is playing lead at a London theatre!" Both their faces darkened, and Hoppy stopped half-way in the macaroon she was nibbling. "I call it the devil's own luck!" cried Miss de Montmorency.

"D——d cheek, I call it!" said Hop-o'-my-Thumb.

VII

LITERARY LADIES

WHY has the literary lady always been so badly treated in literature? Novelists, poets, and essayists, from the times of Swift, Pope, and Addison, have conspired to hold her up to obloquy. Even Chaucer, to go back to remoter times, did not dare to make his "Lady Prioress" seem too learned; her French was only—

" After the school of Stratford atte Bowe
For Frensch of Parys was to hire unknowe."

Shakespeare, it is true, somewhat redeemed the character of the middle ages in this respect—for has he not given us, among others, the charming Rosalind and Portia? Richardson, too, tried hard to make the literary lady popular. Clarissa's journal testifies to this, as does also the fact that this charmer could, when making a drawing, remember not to

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draw "the sun, moon, and stars all in one piece!" But all *Clarissa's*, and even all *Harriet Byron's* accomplishments, did not greatly change the fashion. *Fielding*, who did not care in the least whether or not his heroine were learned, as long as she was forgiving, has remained to this day more popular; for the world in general, like *Mrs. Malaprop*, thought and thinks it "a shame for a young woman to be a progeny of learning." Not so long ago, indeed, *Dickens* and his contemporaries ran riot in unpleasant literary females, from *Mrs. Jellyby* to the "Mother of the Modern *Gracchi*;" and *Leech's* caricatures of about the same period—*Leech*, the most amiable and daring of draughtsmen—show the contemporary state of public opinion regarding a "blue-stocking." Surely the unfortunate lady author must have pleaded guilty to other crimes than mere learning, to justify such cruel usage?

But now is the Era of Emancipation begun. Nemesis, slow to move but terrible in her vengeance, has at last overtaken the erring male—and dearly will he be made to pay for

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his past arrogance. Let him no longer imagine that he is to hold the field against the Yellow Asters, the Keynotes of the New Literature. Dickens' "L.L.'s" were not to be mentioned in the same breath with the Literary Ladies of To-day, the Pioneers in the Vanguard of the Battle. (Where women—especially literary women—are concerned, everything must be made to begin with a Capital Letter.) Woman is rebelling from centuries of ill-usage, and deadly will be her aim. The worst of it is, she may over-shoot her mark :

“ . . . We may outrun
By violent swiftness that which we run at,
And lose by over-running . . . ”

The Wandering Jew, if his wanderings lead him in the neighbourhood of literary circles, will be amused to find after all women really so much the same as they were. Character is not altered by conditions—not even by the New Era itself. In Dickens' time the "L.L." interlarded her novels with French words, for this procedure was then thought *distingué*; the George Eliots of to-day prefer German. At some future date, perhaps, it will be

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Hottentot or Chinese. It is all a matter of fashion. We must use some foreign language to express our most inexpressible feelings—a foreign language is so much less hackneyed. It also has this advantage, that many people do not understand it, and it is a great thing not to be understood. Thus, no woman who respects herself—at any rate, no woman with a mind—can get on in literature without the help of such words as *Aufklärung* or *Wesen*, for instance. Why not, in the name of heaven, “Enlightening” or “Being?” The modern literary lady knows her public, and knows also that mere enlightening and being would not do half her business. George Eliot began it—and have we not greater than George Eliots here? Does it not strike a chord within us, that immortal sentence from the Sibyl’s diary: “Walked with George over Primrose Hill, and talked of Plato and Aristotle?”

In these days we are nothing if not serious. “We will not tolerate mediocrity,” as the secretary of a small Scottish lecturing society lately warned the “bright particular stars” of London literary circles, in writing to demand

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their services as lecturers. Not only mediocrity but aimless writing, we will no longer tolerate; yellowbacks we despise; every novel must have a deep underlying meaning; every book must be a crusade. If we cannot crusade against Man, our natural enemy, we must e'en be content with smaller game; but Man is our legal and recognised prey. It is curious to note, by the way, that while she despises man, the advanced literary woman should so often imitate his attitudes, cigarettes, and dress; and, in dress, not the Byronic collars and general *déshabille* of the literary aspirant, but the smart young masher's get-up. This, however, also signifies Revolt; for in bygone days the L.L. had the reputation of being dowdy. We have only to turn to the pages of Dickens to find her description:—

“One of the L.L.'s wore a brown wig of uncommon size. Sticking on the forehead of the other, by invisible means, was a massive cameo, in size and shape like the raspberry tart which is ordinarily sold for a penny, representing on its front the capitol at Washington.”

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The L.L.'s speech was even more astonishing—

“Mind and matter,” said the lady in the wig, “glide swift into the vortex of immensity. Howls the sublime, and softly sleeps the calm Ideal, in the whispering chambers of Imagination. To hear it, sweet it is. But then out-laughs the stern philosopher, and saith to the Grotesque, ‘What ho! arrest for me that Agency. Go bring it here!’ And so the vision fadeth.”

The time, indeed, has gone by for this sort of thing. We are now nothing if not realistic. But if Literary Ladies never reach these flights nowadays, we will not maintain that they never wear cameo brooches or are never dowdy—still less, that they are never capable of having their heads turned. Some time ago we happened to find ourselves in a gathering of literary ladies. About thirty were present, several being of high renown. One man indeed we noticed, but he was alone in his glory, or rather misery; he was evidently alarmed and agitated, and got no further than the door—which indeed he watched darkly, as though

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with a furtive desire to escape. The Literary Lady of greatest repute in the assembly—the newest, most realistic Literary Lady—sat on a high-backed chair of state in the middle of the room, looking, like Horatio Sparkins, as if she “thought of nothing earthly.” Every one in turn had the honour of an introduction to her; every one in turn said gravely this or something like it: “We owe you a debt of gratitude for daring to say what we only think.” It was enough to dazzle the strongest brain. When thirty people had administered their portion of flattery, the celebrity on view looked more sphynx-like than before, and her answers became even more monosyllabic. She might have been the Delphic Sibyl herself.

The talk all over the room was not less alarming: “What is your work?” we heard one lady say to another kindly. “I cultivate the Ego,” replied the female addressed, with promptitude. Fearful of being asked the same question, and not being provided with an equally crushing answer, we fled from the scene of such dissipation.

Is it a wonder, we thought, that literary

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ladies' heads get turned? Even a short course of such treatment would lead us, we felt, to imagine that we too were Rulers of the Universe. And to do women authors justice, it is not only they who are conceited, for literary mens' heads get turned also. The thing is by no means rare. But the redeeming point in men is generally that they are able occasionally to interest themselves in other things besides their work. They bear their learning more lightly; they are less one-ideal. Among the minor poets, indeed, there is not so very much to choose between men and women, which fact is easily accounted for when one reflects that the poetic nature is essentially a sensitive nature, and therefore more or less feminine. As a rule, we should say—whether the woman whose writings you admire be poet or author—do not seek to know her; best leave the “gem of purest ray serene” unsought and unsolicited. Ideals are, like chemists' coloured vases, not meant for too close inspection.

We once knew a bright and pretty girl who entertained a terrible recollection of a

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dinner with George Eliot ; and we ourselves feel that if that authoress's conversation was at all like her diary it must have been an alarming ordeal. "I went to the Museum," the lady records of a visit to Oxford, "and had an interesting morning with Dr. Rolleston, who dissected a brain for me." "I like," she observes in another place, "a dose of mathematics every day to prevent my brain from becoming quite soft." Oysters become in her hands "well-flavoured molluscs." We feel, while reading the pages of her diary, what literature must have been in the palmy days of Mrs. Chapone, Mrs. Carter, and Miss Seward, and we sympathise a little even with Dr. Johnson's unkind sayings. Acquaintance with too many learned ladies may have led Talleyrand to answer, when asked why he had married such a stupid woman : "Sir, because I could not find a stupider." Extremes meet, and intellect fatigues when it insists on keeping itself continually on the stretch.

But, after all, there is a great deal to be said for literary ladies. To pioneers of any kind much may be forgiven ; and the pioneers of

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the woman's movement have, notwithstanding their vagaries, distinctly improved the position of their sisters. The Sarah Grands and George Egertons of to-day are not without their uses. There is sometimes good to be gained even from tilting at windmills. "Yet I know," wrote the delightful author of *Phantastes*, "that good is coming—that good is always coming; though few have at all times the simplicity and the courage to believe it." What though the literary woman fix her eyes on vacancy, and seems to be gazing, like Mrs. Jellyby, on "nothing nearer than Borrioboola Gha?" Has she not hastened the close of the period when women were called "little darlings," and expected to know nothing but the recipe for making treacle posset, or for trimming a hat? What if she now and then don a masculine shirt and loll about on chairs; has she not now more claim to man's respect than in the days when her only interest in life was supposed to be the bonnet-shop, and when, like Dora, she could not write without making curly tails to her "g's"? It is so long ago since Pope, after writing that women "had no

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characters at all," thus described the typical woman of his age :

* " Papillia, wedded to her amorous spark,
Sighs for the shades ; how charming were a park !
A park is purchased ; but the fair he sees
All bathed in tears : " Oh, odious, odious trees ! "

The Papillia of to-day is too busy to be capricious and whimsical ; she takes refuge in practicalities and she writes novels terribly full of soul, struggling with an idea that is many sizes too big for her, like a hen trying vainly to lay an overgrown egg. But still it *is* an idea, and that is always something, for

" Who aimeth at the sky
Shoots higher yet than he who means a tree."

Better to walk with George over Primrose Hill and talk of Plato and Aristotle than to have the megrims, or suffer, like poor Dorothy Osborne, from "the spleen." Dorothy Osborne, had she lived in these days, would most probably have written an "epoch-making" novel,—and not merely those charming letters to Sir William Temple ; many of the little humorous touches in which would have been

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lost to the world,—if, indeed, the letters would have existed at all. The world would have lost, but Dorothy Osborne's life would have been fuller for the exchange.

Some people say, by the way, that women have no sense of humour, but is this not a libel? It is only that the grim earnestness of the literary or political woman causes the ungodly to blaspheme. Their earnestness and undue seriousness come in a great measure from their newness. Many of womens' supposed disabilities arise, after all, from the early period of the movement. Women are just emerging from the egg of suppression; it is natural, that, like newly-hatched chickens, they should chirp a little just at first. "There are so few of us who have distinguished ourselves; why should we not give ourselves serious and responsible airs?" Women are terribly self-conscious; directly one of them attains to celebrity she feels the eyes of all the world upon her, and she at once ceases to be natural. She thinks that the small applause of her coterie "is the great wave that rushes round the world," and forthwith she

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must needs wish to found a society, or a religion,—or at any rate talk of her Work as if it began with a capital letter. Hence arise all the cruel jokes and unchivalrous gibes that have been levelled at her, and which we only have to look at the pages of the *Punch* of thirty years back to appreciate the full force of. Fully to understand woman's arrogance now, we must recall the injustices from which she has suffered.

Only little more than a century ago, Dr. Johnson, in allusion to women and public-speaking, delivered himself of a scathing invective. No doubt he would have said equally: "Sir, a woman's writing is like a dog's walking on his hind legs. It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all." Edward Fitzgerald, nearly a century later, though he goes so far as to allow "Taste to be the feminine of Genius," says of a literary lady, "She and her sex had better mind the kitchen and their children, and perhaps the poor; except in such things as little novels, they only devote themselves to what men do much better, leaving that which men do worse or not at all."

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Could Philistinism go further than this? And the sting is one would have expected something better from *Omar Khayyàm*—or did his Persian studies demoralise him?

It is true, on the other hand, that we could not expect much from the old *Spectator*, and are not surprised, therefore, to find Steele begging Mr. Spectator to “turn one Speculation to the due Regulation of female Literature . . . and to tell us the difference between a Gentleman that should make Cheese-cakes and raise Paste, and a Lady that reads Locke and understands the Mathematicks.” True, Johnson was an old heretic, as far as regarded literary women; Fitzgerald, a confirmed and solitary old misogynist; Steele lived in the “dark ages” of the movement; but the injustice is the same. When the “Literary Ladies” of our time have risen superior to these recollections—when they no longer think it necessary to continually assert their superiority to the encroaching *Man*—when they have learned to approach their grievances—their Quixotic wind-mills—with a “sweet reasonableness;” when, in fine, they have acquired the art of bearing their

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learning more lightly—they will attain to that true power of sovereignty in public matters, which, as Mr. Ruskin has pointed out, may always be theirs at home in their “Queen’s Garden,” that sweet *hortus inclusus* which no woman, literary lady though she be, can altogether despise.

VIII

THE MODERN NOVEL ¹

THE other day, during the afternoon crush and consequent wait at one of the large lending libraries, we happened to notice the ways and manners of the different subscribers. One, a plaintive old lady, nearly crowded out of her turn by her more pushing neighbours, said deprecatingly, to the polite young man on duty :—

“Can you tell me what is being read now?”

The young man not only knew what was “being read,” but he knew exactly what would suit his customer.

“Besant’s latest novel,” he said kindly but firmly, “you will be sure to like.”

The old lady wavered.

“Hadn’t I better read a yellow something or other?” she said seriously, evidently anxious to be up-to-date.

The young man shook his head.

¹ June 1895.

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"Not at all the thing for you, I assure you, madam," he murmured in a discreet undertone. "Believe me, the Besant is best. Two books? Here is one on gardening that will just suit you. There is your parcel, madam."

We watched that young man with respect bordering on admiration as he sent off his grateful and pleased customer. Unfailing judges of character, indeed, are Mr. Mudie's young men.

Next in turn came a bouncing young woman, who held a little lap-dog by a chain. But her question was the same.

"What's being read now?" she cried gaily. "Oh!" picking up a stray novel on the counter, reading its title, "*The Fat's in the Fire*—is that being read?"

The attendant hastened to assure her that *The Fat's in the Fire* was being very much read, and the young woman hastened away with her prize, followed by muttered blessings from every one around her, her dog having kindly condescended to entangle its chain around all their legs.

After her came a middle-aged and fuzzy-headed lady.

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"I want," said she, boldly pushing her way to the front, "I want the *Kreutzer Sonata*, and Zola's *Germinal*."

The young man looked at her with cold disapproval.

"We do not keep either of those works," he said frigidly.

We cannot tell whether the fuzzy lady felt this snub, or what she condescended to take instead, for at this precise moment our attention was diverted by a fashionably-dressed damsel, followed by a small footman with a large strap of books.

"Please to give me," she said, in a loud and authoritative tone, "*False Notes, Sharps and Flats, The Superlative Woman, The Yellow Plaister, The Sinful Heart*, and the last two volumes of *The Yellow Shocker*."

"I am extremely sorry, madam," said the young man very civilly, "that I can only let you have the first four of these; for they are such exceedingly popular works as to be in constant demand."

These incidents led us to philosophise—firstly, on the curious distinctions drawn by

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library authorities as to what their public shall or shall not read; and secondly, on the profound influence consequently exercised on literature by the censors of such establishments. Well-meaning these censors may be, but certainly they are neither vigilant nor entirely consistent—for they banish from their shelves many books which will live in spite of them, and welcome all that flood of unpleasant modern fiction which will assuredly pass away, leaving only an ill odour behind it.

But, for the moment, society upholds this style of modern novel; the circulating library encourages it; the novelists multiply it, and it is now in the zenith of its glory. It flourishes like the green bay tree, and is altogether unashamed. Every week it becomes more astonishing; each new novel that is put forth surpasses all its predecessors in effrontery—or, as its author would call it, in “realism.” Society, however, is hardly much to blame for this. It patronises the school in question, not so much from any evil intent, as from a nervous wish, like the old lady at Mudie’s,

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* to appear "up-to-date" and in vogue. What people read is not so much what they want to read, as what is "being read."

At a party the other day, during the post-prandial half-hour sacred to the ladies, modern novels happened to be discussed; several staid and excellent matrons were present, a company proper and respectable to a fault; and yet their main anxiety seemed to be to find out which was the most "daring" recent novel published, and to get it as soon as possible from the circulating library.

"One really must know what people are reading," said Mrs. A., adding, "Of course I should not dream of keeping the thing longer than a day! Fancy, if any of the servants should get hold of it!"

"But it's right to read these things, isn't it?" said Mrs. B. nervously; "these questions are all in the air, they tell me."

"Yes," murmured Miss C. timidly — she was a plaintive little spinster of forty, "and we must not be behind the times. I have been wondering whether I have not reached a time

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of life at which it is my bounden duty to read *Tom Jones*. Now tell me really, do you think I ought?"

The poor little lady spoke of the dreaded plunge into *Tom Jones* as one would speak of a visit to the surgeon—a disagreeable duty, but still a duty.

We will not deny that the average English-woman occasionally nourishes a secret hankering after the forbidden fruit of her youth, but, mainly, as we said, she is in this matter following a fashion, just as she would adopt a crinoline if the mode obliged her to do so. She considers it fashionable to be what she calls *fin-de-siècle*, a vulgar catch-phrase by-the-bye which means nothing. But, among many novel writers themselves and their "sets," there is a kind of disease spreading—the bacillus of so-called "realism," just as there was a bacillus of Theosophy a few years back. Then, all our female literary friends, even those we had previously considered most sane, declared themselves "esoteric Buddhists." Now, they all become "new women," craving to write a modern novel; a novel that shall

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mark an epoch, a novel that shall show more
and more how,

“Scattering the past about,
Comes the New Age.”

For women are mainly, if not altogether,
the authors of the new fiction. The reason
is not far to seek. They are newly emanci-
pated, and to the newly emancipated nothing
is sacred. They are so full of divine rage
against injustice, that they ignore all the charm
and all the power of reticence. Reticence!—
they will have none of it; they will call a
spade a spade with more than the freedom of
their forefathers:

“See the wild Mænads
Break from the wood,
Youth and Bacchus
Maddening their blood.”

(We apologise to the shade of Matthew
Arnold—but he must surely have imaged
forth the “New Woman” when he wrote
that poem.)

A few male authors try to follow in the
steps of the lady novelist in their style, but

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they fall far behind her. Men in old days wrote novels that used to be considered rather "strong meat," but *Tom Jones* is bold and open, not suggestive and morbid. You did not feel as if you would like to wash your face after reading *Tom Jones*, and works of that school; but you feel distinctly unclean after an evening's study of certain recent lady novelists.

The extremes of fashion are always monstrosities, and as monstrosities they are short-lived. Who remembers the "silly novels" of the fifties, or the "mind-and-millinery" romances of George Eliot's sarcasms? Times change, and the pathos of one half-century merges imperceptibly into the bathos of another. *The Yellow Plaisters* and their tribe will either not be remembered at all a score of years hence, or will be only remembered to laugh at. As Professor Max Nordau's amusing book puts it, their authors are "degenerates,"—and their fate will be oblivion. They will be "hurled," as George Eliot wrote, "into the Domdaniel, where I wish all futile writers to sink."

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Ancient and modern novels by lady writers show of course many contrasts when compared; for instance, the heroine of the old school is always young and innocent, though she had a tendency to be pedantic, and could generally "read the Bible in the original tongues"—while the heroine of the modern school, so far from being innocent, has usually so much of a "past" that she has to be thirty at least in order to have had enough of it. The old heroines, whatever else they might be, were always deeply religious; the new are always "free-thinking," or at any rate "passing through a phase." The old heroines talked a great deal about Nature, so that if they did not succeed in being natural, it was hardly their fault; the new are mainly artificial. The old heroine was prudish; the new is nasty. In two points, however, the ancient and the modern agree—and the first of these is, that the heroines of both are always terribly oracular. Here is what George Eliot said of them in 1856:—

"The most pitiable of all silly novels by lady novelists are what we may call the *oracular*

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species—novels intended to express the writer's religious, philosophical or moral theories."

Change the latter words to "irreligious" and "immoral" theories, and who will not recognise a description of more than one new novel of the day?

The second point of resemblance between ancient and modern is the appalling want of humour in their authors. Many women writers, we know not why, are terribly deficient in this saving grace; perhaps it may be because they are inclined to take themselves too seriously. In their stories there is no gleam of light, no relief to the prevailing gloom or horror. No one could tell a terrible story with more pathos and power than Bret Harte,—but he put in the necessary light touches that made the rest stand out artistically. Everything, now, must be all horror; there is no idea of proportion. We are shown only the seamy side of life; we are told only the unpleasant things. It is very inartistic; it is just as bad as beginning at the darker end of the colour scale in painting. The idea and usages of society become distorted and out of focus. Thus we are led to

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believe that the ordinary husband says in everyday life to his wife: "D——n you! you're late for dinner again."

In the story from which we quote it is suggested further that the legs of ballet-dancers form the usual topic of conversation in mixed dinner-parties of ladies and gentlemen. Such a view of life is morbid and unhealthy; it strikes upon one as quite precociously depraved, like a very young person trying to show how much he or she knows of this wicked world. "Let us all wallow in infamy," they cry with the New Woman of the play;—but it is a very make-believe wallowing after all, and you can catch a glimpse of the footlights.

Apart, however, from the necessary "wallowing," it is also needful that the "up-to-date" novel should yearn after something unattainable. It does not so much matter what, but something must be yearned for, and hinted at through some four hundred weary pages. "If they've got anything to say," we feel inclined to cry impatiently—"why in the world don't they say it and have done with it, instead of making such an infernal clacking?"

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But they don't know what they want—nor does anybody else—though it is certain they are making a great noise about *something*; and in this world, if you can only bluster sufficiently, you are always sure of a following. So the lady novelists in question cry continually for what they don't in the least want to get, and what if they did get would do them no earthly good: they are

“ Like infants crying in the night,
And with no language but a cry.”

And while, like the inimitable damsels in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, they abuse men, they must needs copy them, plagiarise their style, adopt masculine *noms-de-plume*, as well as their shirts and hats.

The novels which we are discussing may perhaps be divided roughly into two classes:—

1. *The Brutal*, which is the most popular at the present day. This style suppresses all the pleasanter facts of life, and exaggerates all the unpleasant ones. It is akin to the “brandy-and-soda” style so much in vogue recently; and its heroes usually get drunk—while its

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heroines are absolutely irrepressible, and generally "feel as if they want to scream."

2. *The Novel with a Purpose.* This has been common to all ages; but the peculiarity of it at the present day is, as we said, that the reader is often left in the dark as to what the particular purpose is. That it is very serious, however, there can be no doubt, and we can generally guess that it is something to do with the Emancipation of Women, for the peccant male gets as severely handled in these novels as he does in Ibsen's dramas. There is one peculiarity, however, common to them all. This is, that the characters talk "sex" and nothing else, as if in the whole wide world of art, music, and literature there were nothing else worth our attention. People are always talked of as if they were animals; indeed, one involuntarily thinks of them as feline, for their movements are described with no suggestion whatever of clothing. This reminds us of the remark made lately by a small child of our acquaintance. This child has a great talent for drawing; her parents are artistic, and possess a great many pictures and statues,

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which the little girl doubtless admires, for she is continually scrawling undraped figures. She insisted one day on showing these early attempts to her mother's visitors. "These," she said, pointing to some of her scantily-clothed scrawls, "are Arts, and those," she continued, turning to some feeble attempt at the nude, "are Fine Arts." Continuing the analogy, we should say that the modern novel is essentially "Fine Art."

Here is the new style of suitor, describing the girl he adores. He says; "As she sat down, I thought that I had never seen such splendid shoulders combined with so slight a hip before." Indeed, she might be a panther at the Zoo!

And here is a description of a girl's pretty neck: "A delicious, solid, white throat rose from the dull stuff like an almond bursting from its husk." Why, it might be something to eat!

The heroine's lips are always "scarlet." Now, no lips are ever scarlet—that is, unless they are part of a "get-up"—and a very bad "get-up" at that. But the artificial is what

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we now worship: as the hero of *The Green Carnation* remarks, "We shrink from the cold and freezing touch of nature. One touch of nature makes the whole world commonplace." Thus, the heroine of the present day must have her eyes "darkened"; she must boast of "a dash of virility, a hint of dissipation, a suggestion of a certain decorous looseness of morals and fastness of manners."

The modern novel must, we are told, before all things "palpitate with life." Well, be it so, but we can surely have life without brutality, or even without mere photographic reproduction, which is not in the least like art. Nothing nowadays must be left out; we will have none of your "hearsays," but must needs study the pathology of cancer from the cancer hospitals, lunacy from Bedlam or Colney Hatch, and crime from Portland Prison. The days of little Charlotte Brontë, who invented grand people's ways from her solitude on the Haworth Moors, and made her great lady say to her footman, "Cease that chatter, block-head! and do my bidding," are gone for ever, more's the pity. No, nowadays everything

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must be exactly true, and the more revolting the truth is, the better. When a murder is committed, stress is laid on the very unpleasant fact that the blood "trickles slowly from the pool at the bedside out under the door, making a second ghastly pool on the top step of the stairs—a thick sorghum red blackening as it thickens, with a sickly serous border."

Blood clots, we know; but why draw attention to the fact? If it is to heighten the horror, we can only say that Dickens' murder scene of the same kind in *Bleak House* (the carved Roman on the ceiling pointing silently to the dark stain on the floor) was about a hundred times as effective, without any descending to loathsome realism. And again, in grief, the heroine's eyes are described as "heavy with bistre stains"; while in another place a woman is not described as looking pale and ill, but as having a skin like "dead, cooked flesh." And of a girl who hears bad news, we read:—

"Her face changes; the blood rushes to it, until a triangular vein stands out on her forehead like a purple whipcord. Her throat looks as if it would burst; a pulse beats in

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her neck ; her upper lip is completely sucked in by the set line of her under one, and her eyes positively squint."

Imagine the author of this passage making a cold and critical study of how a person looks when suffering the first pangs of profound grief. It is brutal ; it is like the dissector's knife ; and besides, it is unnecessary, except to show what the writer means, which is, "See how clever and how realistic I am !"

But enough of this. We need only add that, for the benefit of the uninitiated, it might be as well to append a glossary of the words used in modern novels, which are distinctly not those in everyday use. We cannot particularise them all ; they crop up in every new volume that is issued ; but here are a few of them. (We suggest that they should be printed at the end of each volume, with their explanations, thus :)

"Trottie"—Pretty, sweet, charming.

Ex. "Did you ever see anything so trottie as my new frock ?"

"Nighty"—A nocturnal garment worn by women.

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“Little Devil”—Pretty young woman.

Note. Used usually by itself as an expression of tenderness.

“Beastie”—Woman or dog, or anything that strikes the fancy at the moment.

Ex. (To a woman): “Tired, poor little beastie?” etc. etc. etc.

Will these words, we wonder, be included in our next new English dictionary?

The plots of modern novels are, as a rule, very fragmentary. Any weakness of construction is, however, glozed over by means of frequent stars and dashes (nothing tells a story so easily as stars and dashes); and then the characters are never extricated from difficult positions,—they are just left there without further parley. Indeed, it may be said that the modern novel begins nowhere and ends nowhere. It is so simple and so easy to be vaguely “impressionist” in literature.

The “new novel” has produced a new style of advertising. Extracts from reviews such as the following are paraded, and doubtless serve their purpose:—

“A book as loathsome as this makes a

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record in all the nasty literature which has been produced on the sex question.”—*Daily Paper* (actual quotation).

“Uneducated and unwholesome.”—*Evening Paper*.

Authors have discovered that the more revolting they are, the better is their chance of success. Max Nordau calls them “Epileptoid cripples”; but they have a very good idea of business nevertheless. So everybody insists on “going one better” than his or her—generally her—predecessor. Gaul follows Gaul, and Amurath to Amurath succeeds. What, we ask, must be the feelings of the woman who has successfully launched a “record-breaking” sex-novel, and who looks for a well-merited success, when, in the course of perhaps less than a week, it is succeeded by another yet more audacious?

IX

IBSEN AND THE MORBID TAINT

MANKIND is by nature full of contradictions. We are everlastingly striving, not perhaps for the moon, but, at any rate, for what is placed farthest from our reach. Educate a boy or girl in the strictest Tory principles, he or she straightway becomes a Radical; educate them as Radicals, and they forthwith become Tories. If your daughter or your son happen to set their young affections on undesirable people, they are only rendered the firmer by your opposing them; withdraw your opposition, and in nine cases out of ten they will withdraw their affections also. By following the same analogy, we begin dimly to see the reason why the present generation yearns after the morbid in literature. "Children of a larger growth," we long still for what is most unattainable. In older times our education itself had a morbid bent, our young lives were

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gloomy; hence we loved, in fiction, sturdy ruffians like Tom Jones—at the theatre, robust plays like Sheridan's. Now that a new day has dawned, and the whole tendency of modern education is to fill us with "the joy of life," we must needs seek darkness, not, it is to be hoped, because our deeds are evil, but because the morbid taint will out. It is a curious and a pregnant fact, that a childhood fed on Bunyan's devils and Mrs. Sherwood's hell should revel, on emerging, in robust authors like Fielding or Lever, while one nourished on nothing darker than Lewis Carroll's nonsense or dainty fairy-tales should delight in Henrik Ibsen.

Ibsen is the great master of the morbid school, and for his "boom" we have for years been preparing ourselves. The great Norwegian dramatist satisfies that inward craving which the doctrine of the "joy of life" had repressed in us in our youth. Directly we are not allowed to read story-books, that instant do they become of supreme and engrossing interest. Most of us are now constrained to be so matter-of-fact and business-like in real

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life, that the morbid in fiction we will have at any price. Dramas such as *Rosmersholm*, *The Master-Builder*, *Hedda Gabler* are, with all their unadulterated gloom, altogether in the spirit of the time.

Curiously enough, it may be said, and indeed it seems to follow out the theory of contradictions, that it is not the morbid among us who love Ibsen, but exactly their opposites. *Les extrêmes se touchent*. The matter-of-fact, reasonable, distinctly sane people, it is they who worship the master. To the naturally morbid and weaker vessels, and notwithstanding our altered times, there are a few such yet among us, such dramas as *The Master-Builder* are intensely painful. There is too much of the real thing—too much of the dissecting scalpel, cruelly probing the secrets of the disordered brain. But with the eminently sane it is mainly the extreme cleverness of the artist, his knowledge of some phases of human nature, his wonderful psychological studies, that appeal to them.

To the man who has never yearned for the unattainable, never felt within him a striving

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towards an impossible goal, never been torn by disappointed ambition, who has retained through all troubles and trials of life the priceless gift of a "robust conscience," the wavering, brilliant, unstable Halvard is an attractive figure. To a woman of a practical turn of mind, to whom "the daily round, the common task" are all-sufficient, who has never, in fact, even as a child, "cried for the moon," or wanted what she had not got, to her the master-builder's wife is simply an interesting study in eccentricity.

It is surprising how interesting a medical diagnosis may be when we ourselves are not the persons immediately concerned; or how little the extraction of a tough molar affects us when we are not sitting in the dentist's chair.

The Ibsen plays are so much like real life we say—and yet the most morbid and brain-sick among us must feel that we could not, with any vestige of self-respect, talk as the Master's characters do. But after all, if the stage were exactly to represent real life, it would be dull indeed; the whole effect must

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be heightened, broadened ; hence, Ibsen's heroes and heroines, without exception, say things that their prototypes among us would only think. How narrow always is the border-line that divides us from insanity comes out here with alarming clearness :

“ What can minister to a mind diseased ? ”

And then, to make the whole effect of the Ibsenian drama gloomier, the blackness is totally unrelieved by a single gleam of humour. Involuntary humour indeed there may be, to the more turbulent and irreverent spirits among the audience, as when Mrs. Solness laments her “ nine lovely dolls,” when Hedda Gabler, handing the pistol to Løvborg, bids him shoot himself “ gracefully,” or when Rosmer, the man who, like Henry III., never smiled, feels it to be his particular mission to “ go about spreading joy and happiness among countless multitudes.” But real, genuine humour there is none. The very servants and supers are so affected by the prevailing gloom, that when they have to announce tea or a visitor they do it in sepulchral tones, very much as if they were announcing a

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a funeral *cortège*. The whole thing is so unalleviated that to those weaker spirits to whom we have alluded, we can quite imagine that a compulsory course of Ibsen would, in a very short time, upset their mental balance, and make them "see through a glass darkly" for the rest of their natural lives. For the Norwegian holds a dark mirror up to nature, and omits all her lighter tones. Like Rembrandt, he paints from the lower end of the scale. It is true, he talks much of the "joy of life," but there is little enough of it in his works.

The traveller who penetrates into the less frequented parts of Norway may there trace the evolution of the Ibsenian drama. Here are desolate, lonely houses, like Pastor Rosmer's, and narrow-minded, self-centred people, holding frantically on to their old conservatism. Their solitary life is reflected in the character of the people; the Norwegians, notably those of the less populous districts, are a solemn people, and, like Rosmer, are rarely known to laugh. Only in such a narrow, shut-in society could one imagine a scene taking place, like that in the first act of *Rosmersholm*, where the

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hero makes up his mind to a momentous confession to his friend and Rector. The confession *se fait attendre*, and the audience is long kept on the tenterhooks of expectation. Is he going to confess a murder, or a forgery? It must be one of these at least? Nothing of the sort! It is only that he has become a Radical.

All contrasts are charming, and to us, who live in the midst of hurry and change, such scenes are refreshing enough. The morbid craving is satisfied at the smallest possible personal trouble. We ourselves do not disturb our households for so little. If in our mental journeyings we have travelled far from the old paths, we do not proclaim the fact from the house-tops. Ibsen, on the other hand, is a kind of moral Don Quixote; it is against hypocrisy like this that he tilts incessantly; in his plays, *The Enemy of the People*, *The Pillars of Society*, this is his theme. We—whether we possess the morbid taint or not—have not the courage of our opinions; but we are not yet without admiration for those who have.

In such a centre as a dull, shut in, stagnant Norwegian town—if being a Radical is counted

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a capital crime, one can readily imagine how black the blacker shades must be. Self-introspection may here become a veritable disease. In the *Master-Builder* the hero longs for a fire to burn down his house, and give him a chance of distinguishing himself in its rebuilding. Vaguely thinking of this, he omits to mend a crack in the chimney—perhaps the fire may come that way. The fire does *not* come that way; we find out after half-an-hour's talking, that it came from some quite other cause; but nevertheless, the Builder blames himself for all the misfortunes brought by the fire, just as if the neglected crack had really caused it. That "crack in the chimney" was almost too much for the sympathising Hilda, as it certainly was for most of the audience. But how many among us have not experienced something like it? The crack in the chimney certainly struck a chord in the hearts of a good many, a chord that vibrated with absolute pain. Precisely the people who understand this kind of thing best are those to whom it is most harmful.

Ibsen is above all things a moral censor. His Nemesis is as unfailing as the most rigid

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moralist could desire—nay, there is even a Nemesis when we hardly see the need for one—else why is poor Mrs. Solness punished for a crack in the chimney which was never so much as imagined by her? But better—the righteously-minded will say—a Nemesis when undeserved than none when deserved—and, therefore, Ibsen's plays should be most desirable for the young, to whom reproof, surely, need hardly ever come amiss. We can, moreover, more or less comprehend the Nemesis; but what can we say of the many other riddles to be solved?

The Ibsen cult is as yet only in its beginning. Apart from his genius, the Master is obscure. This is the very element of popularity. The first desideratum in the modern race for fame is to write so that no one can understand you. Hans Andersen's fable of *The Emperor's New Clothes* was not written without deep insight into human nature. What Ibsen clearly means by such plays as the *Master-Builder* as yet remains a mystery. The oracle of Delphi was wise in its generation. Ibsen, no less wise, will doubtless keep silence, or restrain himself to

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oracular utterances. What he has written he has written—we can interpret as we will. To the healthy-minded, as we said, it means one thing; to the morbid, another. Practical-minded people have suggested many meanings. The *Master-Builder* is, according to some, but one vast allegory. The “tall spires” that Halvard Solness talks all through the play of building over his “homes for the people,” they are to symbolise the Master’s own works, which are too high above the average mind to be properly appreciated. Like Solness, Ibsen yearned at first to do greater things, to build up, not churches, but great classical works; now, he has to content himself with quiet domestic dramas, fit, if not exactly for “father, mother, and a troop of children,” at any rate for “the people” in a general sense. Others, again, maintain that the much-discussed scene in which Mrs. Solness mourns the destruction of her “nine lovely dolls” is another piece of autobiography. The “nine dolls” are supposed to refer to the nine early works of the author. The answer to this and other conundrums we will leave to a future Ibsen Society.

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With Ibsen one cannot separate the morbid from the beautiful. How brightly, for instance, amid the prevailing blackness of *Ghosts*, does the creation of Mrs. Alving stand out; Mrs. Alving, the widow of the depraved drunkard, who, in mistaken zeal, after her husband's death raises him to a saint, in order to keep his memory pure in the heart of his only son! How touching is the faith and unselfishness of Thea to her idol, the erratic genius Eilert Lövborg!—how inspiring, amid all her wickedness, is the personality of Rebecca West! It is a curious trait of Ibsen, that his women, as a rule, are, even in their bad phases, so much stronger and more sympathetic than his men. The mysterious witch Hilda, with her entrancing vitality—well, she is wonderful all through, but then she is hardly a good test, as we can scarcely dissociate her from Miss Elizabeth Robins' wonderful creation. And then, as regards the dialogue of the plays, how pretty some of the thoughts are, as they flash up ever and again from the gloom of their context! Oswald Alving, with his brimming sense of "the joy of life"; Eilert Lövborg with "the

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vine-leaves in his hair;" Halvard Solness, in the craving of his warped genius: "Have you never noticed, Hilda, how it draws us after it—the Impossible?" or in his cry of pity for his wife: "She, too, had a talent for building—for building up the souls of little children;" Hilda, with her thrilling intensity of egoism, "You promised me a kingdom," and more beautiful than all, when the Master-Builder climbs the giddy vane at her bidding: "Do you see one wrestling with him on the tower?"

These are only a few instances out of many. When one has shuddered or scoffed, as the case may be, there still remains so much that sticks in one's mind. Irreverent spirits may mutter at the news of the Master-Builder's death, "Well, *that's* a good job, any'ow!" and they may jeer at the "nine lovely dolls"; and Mrs. Solness, the Master-Builder's wife, whose children have perished in the fire, may seem to us, as she aimlessly wanders about, watering polished console-tables from a big watering-can, to be a very feeble, half-witted creature, with no talent at all for building up anything, much

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less children's souls ; yet the Idea is patent enough through it all—we cannot scoff at that.

Ibsen is in deadly earnest ; and to any one who is in deadly earnest we must listen, even though he does not “prophesy smooth things.” Like Coleridge’s wedding-guest, “we cannot choose but hear.” And that he is heard specially now proves the serious and almost morbid tendency of the time. Some of us dislike humbug so much that we prefer to see things through black spectacles than through unduly rose-coloured ones. And then—and this is a less innocent explanation of “the Master’s popularity”—to tell the truth, both novels and plays must have a slight tinge of impropriety or crankiness to succeed nowadays. In default of impropriety, crankiness will do. Not very evident, perhaps—delicately enough suggested—but none the less it must be there. It is better when it is there, as it is in Ibsen, with a serious motive. Our sturdier ancestors said things straight out, they did not mince matters any more than Zola himself ; but still there are some of us who find Zola less corrupt than many a work

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allowed in middle-class drawing-rooms and in respectable circulating libraries.

There will always be a large class who like *risqué* books and plays, quite apart from their motive. But this, though doubtless it is one reason, is not the principal reason why so many people like Ibsen. This comes mainly from the study in contrasts before alluded to. Brought up in the Puritan household, we sought for gaiety; brought up in the latter-day nursery, we seek for gloom. For gloom of some kind or other is a need of our natures. Take away our hell fires and our lost spirits, and lo—we must have an Ibsen.

But, indeed, the "morbid taint" is only too real with some of us. Like the poor, it is "always with us." It is "a thing to dream of, not to tell," and, the less dreamt of—in some cases—the better. We do not all need Ibsen dramas to make it more patent to us. However, to the large majority of comparatively healthy-minded people, Ibsen can only do unmixed good, by opening to them a new world of profound psychological lore hitherto undreamt of.

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To old-fashioned Christians it was a relief once a year to say the Communion Service, and to curse heartily without sin ; it gave their feelings "a went." The Communion Service is "going out"—eternal punishment is out of date—but we can still study the tortures of the damned with the help of a play of Ibsen's, and thereby appease the unsuspected, yet relentless, "morbid taint."

X

CHARACTER IN DRESS

“Ladies, like variegated tulips, show ;
'Tis to their changes half their charms we owe.”

—POPE.

“Mrs. L—— is a charming woman, isn't she?” I lately overheard one lady say to another, in the would-be genial manner so common at society crushes, “and so clever.”

“Oh, my dear! *Charming!*—in that awful beaded mantle, and with her clothes pitchforked on like that! They none of them agree. One would think she had got them at a ‘rummage sale!’ She *may* be learned—I don't say she isn't—but no woman with a feather stuck into her bonnet at that angle *could* be clever—or, if it comes to that, even really *good*.”

Which true anecdote I hereby take for my text. People talk of the hand-shake, the voice, the shape of the head and eyes, as an

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index to character, but what about that most important of all—the clothes? “Man is, emphatically, a clothed animal,” said Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus*, and, indeed, it is so. It is difficult, even for the philosopher, entirely to dissociate the one from the other. Clothes confer not only character, but also reverence, adulation, social status; they are, so to speak, the hall-mark that, fairly or not, distinguishes the wearer from his kind.

Which of us, more especially which woman of us, can altogether rise superior to her clothes? Even a modern Sappho must, if she wishes to succeed, know that poetry cannot properly be associated with an ill-fitting back; even a twentieth-century George Eliot is conscious that Philosophy, whatever it was in the times of Pope and Lady Mary, cannot now afford to be untidy or ill-clad. No; the clothes make the Man—or Woman—in more senses than one. Is there not, in this connection, a charming story told of Sir Richard Wallace—the millionaire and collector of the riches of Hertford House now bequeathed to the public? Before his death he determined to present

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a little picture by Terburg, of unique and fabulous value, to the nation. With this object in view, he called on the then director of the National Gallery, Sir William Boxall. Being, however—as is not uncommon even with millionaires—unattended and somewhat shabby, he was very nearly sent away unheard—his gift rejected. On realising the mistake, “I nearly fainted,” said the Director; “I had all but refused ‘The Peace of Münster’—one of the wonders of the world!”

In the olden days—the days of Chaucer—character in dress was better understood. People, it is true, had not much choice; everybody had to “dress up” to his or her part; there were special costumes for citizens of all classes, for apprentices, for the many grades of the priesthood, even for the public executioner; every one formed part of a vast pageant; and poor Mary Queen of Scots, when she appeared before the black-draped block clothed all in blood-red, was but closing her “act drop” in character, with something of the same spirit that Dickens’s “Mrs. Skewton” showed when she ordered with her

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failing breath "rose-coloured curtains for the doctors."

But, after all, the "Character in Dress" of mediæval days was national rather than personal; and in our own times, when all persons can dress exactly as they please, are bound by no rules, dispensations, restrictions, or pedantries, the field for the showing of individual character is, of course, larger; less picturesque, perhaps, but certainly larger. In women—for in this matter of dress ladies naturally have precedence—character in dress shows itself, primarily, in three very distinct types; types whence all the innumerable subdivisions take their beginning. These are:—

1. The Tailor-Made.
2. The Artistic (so-called).
3. The Merely Clothed.

To the first class, that of the tailor-made, belongs the clique called "Smart Society," and also all the women who are by nature neat, methodical, and generally exemplary. This class usually does its hair like a fashion plate, follows like the sheep in any prevailing

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fashion, and alters its natural shape to kangaroo-like pouches and twisted or elongated waists, whenever the prevailing mode will have it so. This class can generally contrive to cross the Channel on a blowy day without having so much as a hair out of place; it is careful not to discompose itself by any undue emotions or fatigues; it manicures, massages, peroxides, and laces, at discretion. It can wear collars of several inches in height; it could even, I believe, wear a hair shirt without a murmur, did fashion so require it. This kind will discuss massage and dress unceasingly at a morning call; it regards appearance as a matter of absolutely primary and vital importance; and far be it from me to say that it is not in the main right.

The artistic type differs from the foregoing principally in that it wears either soft lace collars, or, indeed, no collars at all. The collar, be it noted, is of absolutely unique importance in the study of character. See a man's collar, you might almost say, and you will see the man! Even a tie can be eloquent. "A made tie that hooks on," says the author

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of the *Diary of a Nobody*, belongs to a soft man, with a soft heart, with a soft head. And an abnormally high collar argues, in either sex, small brain power; just as one of medium height will tell of firmness, neatness, order, and common sense. A woman's neat, trim lace collar will, in the same way, show an amiable, easy-going nature, impulsiveness, affection; a floppy one, artistic feeling, unconventionality, originality, and sometimes even genius. There are rare occasions, and rare people, too, with whom "a sweet disorder in its dress" is not without a charm. The artistic type of woman, when not degenerated into mere untidiness, is really more interested in dress than any; she brings to the all-important subject all the intelligence that in other women would rule the kingdom, the world of fashion, or the home; she may even design her own costumes, and sometimes (if not rich) make them or pin them on herself. She is, perhaps, fonder of pinning than of sewing; but she pins so well that you would imagine that her clothes came from Worth at least. She is, moreover, the slave of no passing

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mode; but can afford in this matter to be "a law unto herself."

The merely clothed is a very common type, and is difficult to class definitely. Very often it is the result, not so much of character as of want of time, money, or ability. To it belong, in turn, many varying types:—

1. That of the woman who never troubles to think about her clothes at all, till she is obliged suddenly to rush into the nearest shop to buy what is called a "reach-me-down";

2. That of the professional woman, who regards her dress either as a necessary evil or as a matter of secondary importance; and

3. That of the large class of women whose slender dress allowance has to be eked out carefully, and whose "contriving" is generally all directed towards the painful task of making old look like new.

Of course, even to this last and saddest class, some people (though mainly, it must be confessed, in novels), have lent distinction. Beautiful Milly, for instance, the curate's wife in *Amos Barton*, whose "turned black silk" only made her look lovelier; Bret

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Harte's charming "Miggles," whose "wet gown of coarse blue stuff could not hide the beauty of the feminine curves to which it clung"; King Cophetua's "beggar maid," &c., &c. It is difficult, however, outside a novel, as most women will agree, to lend much grace to an old or demoded gown. Is not the possession of a skirt of last year's cut in itself now regarded as a social disgrace? Yes, on the whole, the merely clothed is a depressing, if worthy, class; and it forms the vast majority. One might, perhaps, go so far as to generalise with Professor Teufelsdröckh, and say, broadly, that one-eighth of the world is a dressed world, and the other seven-eighths merely clothed.

Between these three general classes there is room enough and to spare for all sorts and conditions of women—all variations of character. The strictly tailor-made is, perhaps, the most narrow sect of all; you seem to know instinctively the sort of woman who will be tailor-made. Like Mrs. Wilfer, she is usually constitutionally unable to "loll." She laces tightly; she wears an invisible net over her

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neatly braided "coiffure," and it is only by evening that she even indulges herself with such vanities as frilled silk petticoats.

The literary lady of modern life may be said to occupy a position half-way between the artistic and the merely clothed. Too often she belongs, it must be confessed, to the latter. On rare occasions she, too, may be "tailor-made"; but her effort in that line lack smartness; and what is tailoring worth if not "smart"? A special type of literary woman wears, whatever the weather, a billycock hat and an ulster; and what is known as the "bachelor girl" is addicted to somewhat masculine shirts and ties—aggressive shades to colour—and the too ubiquitous sailor hat. The "bachelor girl" smokes cigarettes, and usually, the better to show her untrammelled nature, drops her ashes on the floor; she is given to "lolling," and therefore generally wears neat shoes, a virtue not common to the ordinary English woman. Though the literary lady has vastly improved since the ghoul-like cameo-wearing caricatures of Dickens's day, there is still further room for improvement in

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her. When smart, too often her smartness has an air of shabby finery, as if, like the "Dowd" of Mr. Kipling's story, she had "had her clothes thrown at her," and had "rubbed her bonnet in the flue under the bed." Sad, indeed, is it that the possession of brains in a woman should make for such unreasonableness, for it gives occasion for the ungodly to blaspheme. It is so, however; by their dress ye shall know them. "It is better to be good than pretty," was a depressing but familiar nursery adage, implying a sad dissociation between the two qualities; and even in middle life it must be confessed that the very good are generally not pretty. When a lady calls on you with her hair in early Victorian loops and a dowdy mantle, be sure that she is either a crank or a philanthropist; if her bonnet be very much on one side, or her skirt awry, you may suspect her to be political; if she have big shoes, you may take it for granted that she also has deep interests.

Some people so well understand the effect of dress on character, that they have been known to keep special dresses for varying

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moods, or, indeed, to induce any special frame of mind that may be desirable. This feeling, or superstition, I myself sympathise with thoroughly, and it is, no doubt, a fact that some gowns have a distinct influence on one's thoughts and even on one's actions. "When I want to feel really good," a lady said to me the other day, "I just go and put on a tussore silk made quite plainly; you've no idea what a difference it makes." Another friend has told me that, on the other hand, nothing calms her so much as black Spanish lace. And yet a third will maintain that a "Harris tweed," perfectly fitting, keeps her in that "compact and pious frame of mind" that is so desirable. Every one to his taste. I myself feel that blue serge is distinctly soothing, and that nothing suits a headache so well as Liberty silk. In any case, the effect of dress on the average feminine mind is remarkable. Would any woman, I ask, who feels, on some red-letter evening, an agreeable "inner consciousness" of being well dressed, know herself again for the same person who, only a few hours earlier, sadly wore a faded and ill-cut gown?

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But the matter goes much further than this. In the whole art of love—in the psychology of the wavering proposal—the effect of dress is very marked; the part played by it most important. “My love in her attire doth show her wit,” said Herrick; and, indeed, under this charming fantasy is veiled a deep truth. Great things depend ever from slight causes; and the early comprehension of the effect of dress on character cannot be too well inculcated on the *demoiselle à marier*. Young lives have been spoilt ere now by the inappropriate colours of a moment; just as marriages have been too hastily made by a temporary picturesqueness of effect for which the dress-maker or *coiffeur* was alone responsible. Of course, when once the psychological moment is passed, these things matter little; the spark from Heaven has fallen, and the loved one might be dressed in an old sack for all that the lover would know; but, up to that one moment, the merest trifle is of paramount importance. How impossible to associate cream-coloured chiffon and a twenty-inch waist with future extravagance, incom-

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patibility, or "nagging"! or on the other hand, an ill-fitting blouse and an unbecoming hat with all the domestic virtues! And that man, knowing all this, should even yet be found to wonder why women "think so much about clothes"! But perhaps they do not know?

Dress, indeed, changes much. A very demon incarnate would seem to become a saint if clothed in the dress of an hospital nurse or a sister of charity; and surely even an angel of light would be unrecognisable if attired, say, in the unutterable "crape hat" and muddy three flounce draggled skirt of the slums. In this connection a true story occurs to me. A certain eminent journalist had constituted himself the defender of a murderer, and, on the eve of the poor wretch's execution, published his portrait as an innocent martyr, in a saint-like attitude and garb! It was all most effective. But, on the scaffold, the ungrateful criminal confessed his crime; and, accordingly, on the following day another portrait was published,—the same, yet how different! The block had been "touched up,"

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and dress, expression, ragged beard, all now suggested the murderer. Yes, indeed, as Carlyle said, "what benefits unspeakable all ages and sexes derive from clothes."

Hair-dressing, as regards suggestion of character, has, of course, tremendous effect; though here, indeed, it may be that phrenology has also something to do with the question. The beautiful styles of modern hair-dressing, so like those of the lovely Greek figurines in the Tanagra collection of the British Museum, what grace, sympathy, intellect even, do they not lend to their wearers! Any shade of character, almost, can be imparted by judicious hair-dressing. A charming woman, whose hair happens to grow a little too high on the forehead, may, in one moment (as Miss Marie Tempest does so cleverly in *The Marriage of Kitty*), make herself ugly, unsympathetic, severe, merely by brushing her hair straight back. To another, whose forehead is narrow, even a slight "fringe" gives a lowering, almost Mongolian look. And *per contra*, if she have taste, she may, by artistic coiffure, beautify herself *ad libitum*. Much character, indeed,

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may be divined from a woman's "doing" of her hair. Hair dragged back from the temples suggests a dull, tenacious, prosaic nature; parted in the middle, it gives, in youth, an idea of engaging simplicity; in age, of calm stateliness; drawn high over a cushion, it indicates pride, obstinacy, prejudice, determination; pulled or dropped forward in "early Victorian" loops over the ears, it suggests, in youth, coquetry and slatternliness; in age, conservatism, mingled with pure philosophy.

At the theatre the strange effect of dress on character is, of course, fully recognised. The heroine who begins the first act in spotless innocence and white muslin, deteriorating alike in mind and millinery, changes with chameleon-like rapidity through all the colours of the rainbow, till at last, steeped in crime, she becomes successively yellow, green, and black. No one, surely, could ever be allowed to be wicked in white muslin. If mad, the heroine dons white satin, a venerable tradition, respected even in the days of Sheridan :

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Puff.—"Enter Tilburina . . . stark mad in white satin."

Sneer.—"Why in white satin?"

Puff.—"O Lord, Sir, when a heroine goes mad, she always goes into white satin . . . it's the rule."

In the same way, the villain in melodrama always dresses well up to his part. It is considerate of him; he does it that the public may be under no possible misconceptions. His eyebrows are carefully blackened in a slanting line, either his beard is forked or his moustache is waxed and raised; his shoes (there would appear to be much character in shoes) are pointed and upturned, so as faintly to suggest the cloven hoof, after the manner of Mephistopheles. Similarly, the noble friend of the family, who is universally beneficent, who meddles in everybody's affairs and is everybody's confidant, always ready to listen to the hero's or heroine's long stories when they want to get on with the plot and there is nobody else to tell them to, this friend, to show his boundless philanthropy, always wears a long frock-coat several sizes too big for him.

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Such an article of dress cannot help suggesting the saintliness that is ever next to dowdiness.

Indeed, the knowledge of the effect of dress on character—even male character—is not confined to the stage; it is so well and so generally understood that some great men of real life, of our own day, have sometimes not been above “dressing up” to their part. Often, it is true, the “dressing up” is involuntary; it may then be called rather the result of character on dress. Thus, Mr. Ruskin’s dress, the well-worn, unstarched, floppy wrist-bands of the old school, the rough, north-country frieze, the perennial blue tie, how characteristic they were of the man! And Mr. Chamberlain’s dress and carefully adjusted orchid “button-hole”; does it not proclaim the dapper neatness and methodicalness of the wearer? Lord Tennyson, on the other hand, with his dark, Byronic cloak, loose collar, and shaggy black locks, was he never at all conscious of dressing up to his part? Instances of the effect of character on dress, or of dress on character, might be multiplied for ever. So true is it (to quote

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again *Sartor Resartus*) that "Clothes, so despicable as we think them, are so unspeakably significant." "For Society," adds Professor Teufelsdröckh, "is founded on cloth." And in a Society so founded, who will maintain that dress, for women especially, is not all-important as an index of character?

XI

CLORINDA AT HOME

I. A VIRTUE ASSUMED

My young friend Clorinda is a great theorist on domestic lore. She lets her light shine before her friends and acquaintances, illuminating their daily round of duties. To hear her talk you would imagine that her lamp, like those of the Wise Virgins, was ever kept trimmed and ready, that her household arrangements were flawless, her system, perfection.

"I train my servants myself," Clorinda remarks gaily; "it is the only sensible way. At 8.30 we breakfast (Marmaduke is a very punctual man); at nine, the cook 'clears away,' and I give orders, and go out with a basket to do the day's marketing. I allow no such extravagance as tradesmen's books. At eleven, I do the flowers and write notes.

Clorinda at Home

At one—oh, it's all neatly written down on paper—my duties, and the cook's, and all—no hour of the day is left out.”

All Clorinda's married friends were loud in their admiration. “It is really extraordinary,” said these wise matrons, “how such a pretty young woman should have such a wonderful head for management—the work her servants do! and the dinners she contrives! and all on so little!” “Wonderful!” echoed a lady journalist, who had imbibed Clorinda's gospel with avidity; “I must go home and write an article for *Society Snippets*, ‘On the Wholesome Re-awakening of Domesticity.’” “I haven't been to see her,” they would all usually add; “she lives up so many stairs, and she tells me her ‘day at home’ is not settled yet; it will be wise to wait till then.”

But I was wiser—I went to see Clorinda in her own home.

Clorinda has been married a year, and the roseate lines of her honeymoon have only just begun to “orb into the perfect star” of distance. She lives in a “flat,” otherwise, in three rooms; a suicidal dark cell, where

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an innocent cook does daily penance, and a cupboard that is apt to hit you on the head, unless you are careful.

I knocked for some minutes at Clorinda's door without obtaining any answer, and at length, to my surprise, a dirty-faced looking girl, with her hair done in early Victorian loops—a sort of columbine or *coryphée* caught in the garish light of day—opened to me. She had evidently been black-leading the stove as well as her face, and it had not agreed with her temper. I wondered why any one should “black-lead” stoves at three o'clock, and more especially when I remembered Clorinda's neatly-tabulated day of servants' duties. After traversing a dirty passage-way, which I thought showed signs of recent scrimmage, I was shown into a dining-room, where a lady, redolent of whisky, whose bearing betrayed her as of the “charing” class, was snorting over “doing up” the grate. She incontinently fled at my presence, and presently Clorinda came in. Clorinda looked decidedly ruffled, and, like her *coryphée*-domestic, a trifle warlike. Through the pink-and-white distress of her mirror-like

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face, I could trace the conflicting emotions with which she assured me, in as good a "company voice" as she could feign, of her intense joy at seeing me.

"*How* good of you to come!" she cried, wringing my hands in agonised joy. And we talked disinterestedly of many things, but with one accord we ignored the subject of household management.

Tea came in. The cups were inefficiently wiped, and with the slipshod servant entered a strong smell of whisky—a fact I again saw with pain reflected in the flickering shadows of Clorinda's face. Sounds of a muffled skirmish, as of some one dancing a hornpipe outside, came presently to us through the thin walls.

"Do you hear anything?" Clorinda inquired nervously.

"The street noises are rather loud just now," I said, as I stoically munched my muffin.

Then a sudden, awful crash resounded. Clorinda turned deadly pale; in her emotion she almost dropped the tea she was handing me: "I must go," she said faintly; "do

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excuse me!" and she fled into the hall, where I presently heard the tramp of the hall porter, and the shrill whistle for the police.

.

An hour later, Clorinda was still sobbing on the sofa, in dishevelled woe, and I was still vainly attempting to console. The drunken charwoman was in the care of the law, and the *coryphée* was recovering from "the screamin' sterries" somewhere in the back regions. "I must tell Marmaduke to dine at the club again to-night," Clorinda was groaning. "Evangeline" (the *coryphée*) "can't cook. I took her because her mother was such a nice woman, and because she had never been in service before. . . . She reads the *Family Herald* all day in the back-kitchen, and curls her hair."

I thought of the "little dinners," with the glowing account of which Clorinda used to regale her envying friends, and marvelled. Yet, after all, I need not have been surprised. The lady had really protested too much. Would one not naturally suspect a man who habitually caressed his wife and child in

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public of being a bad husband—a Mrs. Beeton to be an ill provider?

“You saw my plan of household duties,” sobbed Clorinda; “could anything be more complete or more well-arranged?”

“Yes, it all looks very nice—on paper,” I said.

“To-day,” Clorinda said dramatically, “at half-past eleven there was no hot water for Marmaduke’s bath.”

“I thought you said the household breakfasted at 8.30,” I murmured.

“Well,” Clorinda confessed, “to-day I overslept myself, and Marmaduke was late, and, somehow everything went wrong. *These* catastrophies will happen sometimes. There was nobody to do the work, and the charwoman got drunk, and Evangeline did not rise to the occasion, and——”

“And the plan was but a paper one after all,” I reflected sadly, but I wisely abstained from comment. “I’ll get you that stop-gap I told you of,” I said, as I took my leave; “now cheer up, and do your hair.”

Clorinda showed me to the door—the *coryphée*,

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red-eyed and still dirty, filling up the back-ground. "You'll not tell the Smiths and the Joneses," Clorinda said huskily at parting. I promised silence. Yet she still had something to say: "I've had twenty-six servants in a year," she whispered sadly; "this one, when she came, said she felt she could love me as a sister, and she's been worse than any!"

It doesn't seem as if Clorinda's training had been of much good. People vary, and perhaps I am myself of a suspicious nature, for I should myself not trust any servant who wore her hair in early Victoria loops and vowed she would "love me as a sister."

"All is Vanity," said the Preacher, and I really think that I agree with him.

But I have not given Clorinda away. She still shines, a beacon-light on household management to the trusting matrons of Suburbia. And in *Society Snippets* a flaming article on the "Revival of the Domestic Art," or "What the Young Wife can do for the Home," sings, only last week, her praises.

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2. THE REGISTRY OFFICE

"It's all right," said Clorinda to me, as we journeyed to her special registry office, in a green-and-yellow 'bus. "I've done it! I've given cook notice!"

There was indeed a warlike gleam in Clorinda's eye, and the plumes of the pretty black chiffon hat that surmounted her wavy curls nodded themselves with something of a militant air. (I wish Clorinda did not always when she is angry make me think of a kitten attempting to look stern, or a baby trying to swear.)

"I felt quite faint after it," Clorinda went on, rubbing a soft and suspiciously pink nose with a diminutive pocket-handkerchief; "but Zoe was very kind; she gave me some sal volatile. . . . Zoe is a perfect treasure of a maid; she brushes my hair every evening for an hour, and tells me all the dreadful things the servants have been doing; you can't think how soothing it is——"

"The servants' misdeeds, or the hair-brushing?" I inquired.

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"It is such a comfort," said Clorinda impressively, ignoring my interruption, "to know exactly what goes on in one's house . . . to be quite sure one knows the worst. That is just why I am getting rid of cook. I should never have *dreamed* of such duplicity as hers, if it had not been for Zoe. She told me that cook said openly downstairs that I was 'no kind of a manager,' that 'anybody could get round me,' and—what do you think besides?—'that she had a policeman in to tea, and gave him the remains of my hot muffins and crumpets!' So I determined to give her notice at once."

"And you did?"

"I planned it all beforehand . . . it kept me awake most of last night. 'Cook,' I said, 'I give you notice to leave this day month.'"

The remarkable originality of this nearly took my breath away. "Was that all?" I asked.

"Oh! I just added, 'You know WHY'" (a dramatic pause). "And she said NOTHING—nothing at all! Of course that told everything!"

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But I did not see that it did. "It seems hardly to have been an occasion for *sal volatile*," I said ungratefully.

"Oh! I felt as if I had no legs, you know; just as if my voice sounded miles away," said Clorinda. "It costs something to get up a manner such as mine was. Now I'm determined to get a cook who has no taste for policeman, and who will clear away the breakfast. Some one in the 'general servant' line who gives herself no airs. But supposing she wears creaking shoes! General servants, I've noticed, are so often creaky. . . . Marmaduke can't endure creaking shoes; they give him nervous breakdown. He was never well—do you remember?—as long as Amelia Moggs lived with us. . . . But I've suffered so from 'superior' servants that I thought I must try a humble registry office. . . . Oh! here we are. Quick! jump out!"

The registry office was so very diminutive that one might well have been excused for passing it by. It was situated apparently somewhere in the dim recesses of a greengrocer's shop, and as Clorinda and I traversed the rows of

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succulent vegetables we were aware as of a solemn tribunal awaiting us in the dim parlour beyond.

"You see," Clorinda explained to me as we proceeded, "you pay your fee, and if you don't get a servant to suit you take it out in vegetables. It's their system."

I assented cheerfully, although to load oneself with cauliflowers and savoys seemed but an unsatisfactory substitute for a cook or housemaid. "I dislike your high-class registry offices," I remarked amiably and tactfully. "The last time I went to one of them, the hall-porter said crushingly, 'Servants this way!' I had on a shabby waterproof, it's true, for it was raining, but all the same I felt snubbed."

"I wish you would remember to put on your gloves," Clorinda here muttered in an irritated parenthesis; "it's so important to make a good impression." And she let her silk skirts trail in the dust with an aristocratic "swish."

It seemed to me that the ordeal promised to be far more trying to us than to the

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servants. As Clorinda and I advanced between a double row of them we felt distinctly nervous. But were they really servants? Some of them seemed aged and infirm; they sat like avenging Parcæ, or like the dread ladies of Madame la Guillotine, each one with her knitting. Could it be that any one in her senses would engage these decrepit old ladies? It seemed extraordinary. Were they relatives of the mysterious greengrocer, or were they merely decoy-ducks, stage supers paid to sit here for the day and pose as servants or mistresses as occasion required? Or it might even be that they were going through a "greengrocery cure," and found the pervading aroma of the surrounding vegetables beneficial.

Anyway, they all took great interest in Clorinda. A bland lady, who sat at a desk just beyond the knitting tribunal, begged to know her requirements. A kettle hummed pleasantly on the fire, and the aroma of hot toast was wafted in from some adjoining room. Clorinda played with her sables, and explained her wants at some length, with a little unnecessary detail, and perhaps a few trifling

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divergencies with respect to "cook," creaking shoes, the policeman, and the crumpets.

The bland lady intervened. There was, it appeared, a sudden and most regrettable dearth of "cook generals" that day. Only yesterday they had come in shoals; but to-day the influenza had played havoc with their ranks. . . . So unfortunate! There was thus, it seemed, only one possible cook, or one damsel who passed as such, among the waiting phalanx of elderly ladies. Of this person there was very little, and that little was more aggressive than loquacious. She looked at Clorinda and me with suspicion latent in her eye.

"Business 'ouse?" she inquired mechanically, somewhat as if the question was jerked out of her.

No, we disowned the "business 'ouse."

"Boardin'-'ouse?" was the damsel's next query.

"Certainly not," said Clorinda with dignity. "I board no one but my own immediate family. Not even policemen," she added, with spasmodic recollection. "You are not fond of policemen?" (this with sudden doubt).

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“*Policemen!*” said the cook-applicant with some hauteur; “why, I’m walking out with a young man in the ‘airdressin’ line, an’ ’e don’t want me to go too far from ’is custom. . . . No, I ain’t fond of policemen, nor yet of open ranges. Did I ’ear you say a open range?”

Here, seeing that it was to be a long business, I discreetly turned away and admired the cabbages. By the time I returned Clorinda’s applicant had taken a “back seat,” and she herself was the centre of an admiring audience—an audience, in fact, of the “*Parcæ*,” who, dropping their knitting, were freely offering disinterested advice.

“What I says is, as I says to all young ’ouse-keepers,” one was remarking, “begin as you mean to go on; ’ave clear rules; then you won’t ’ave to stand no nonsense.”

“I always write out a neatly tabulated list of the cook’s daily duties,” said Clorinda, “and I hang it up in her bedroom.”

“Quite right. I like to see a young merried ’ooman so pertikler,” commented another approving member of the tribunal.

But during this conversation the cook-

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applicant had walked away. The cabbages hid her retreat. Was she—horrible thought—herself a “perennial” servant, a mere decoy-duck? And was the “’airdressin’ young man” himself a fabrication of thin air?

“I wonder why she did that?” said Clorinda puzzled. “She seemed so promising, she agreed to everything; even to clearing the breakfast things. And I don’t think that even Marmaduke could object to such a *very* slight squint. But” (hopefully) “she knows where I live. She probably had to catch her train.”

“It may be the hairdresser’s ‘day out.’ Or perhaps her shoes creak,” I suggested.

“She will doubtless call on you to-morrow,” said the Head of the Tribunal. Then (as I waited to adjust my veil) in a “quick change” and undertone: “Don’t you think o’ stirrin’ yet, Mrs. Jones. I thought we was never goin’ to git rid of ’er; some of ’em do worrit so. . . . The tea’s on the ’ob, and it’s drawed somethink beautiful . . . and M’ria, she’s nipped out to git a pat o’ the best fresh an’ some s’rimps.”

“Thenk you kindly, Mrs. Moss. I do like

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the 'omeliness of these 'ere little parties. They 'elp to pass the time away somethink wonderful, an' we all says the same. I've turned the 'eel of my stockin' a fair treat. She was a pretty young thing, too! but lor'! she don't know much."

The "pretty young thing" was meanwhile waiting for me by a pile of blushing beet. "Come along! what are you waiting for?" she said.

"I gave her my address," Clorinda repeated doubtfully, as we left the shop. "But," she added more cheerfully, "I can always take her out in cabbages. It's their system."

"It's not a bad way of selling vegetables," said I.

"How suspicious you always are!" cried Clorinda.

In a few days I again visited Clorinda. I knew that she was "at home," for I found her in one of her periodical fevers of domestic zeal, hanging out of a dining-room window cleaning the sill, while the invaluable Zoe hung out of the other engaged in a similar occupation.

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"Has she come?" I cried.

"Does it look like it?" retorted Clorinda.

I foresee that Clorinda will be enabled to live on vegetables for some time to come.

3. THE USEFUL MAID

"I really must have a Useful Maid," said Clorinda. She was paying a morning call, and looked prettier and more appealing than ever.

"What is a Useful Maid?" I asked.

"A Useful Maid," said Clorinda, "is a maid who will do housework and maid's work too, who is in a way a lady, who considers nothing beneath her, who is equally ready to do your hair, pack for you, clean your silver, wash your handkerchiefs and laces; who runs up dresses for you on the slightest provocation; who has an insatiable passion for using up remnants into blouses; who wants less salary than a real maid; and who gives herself no airs; who——"

Clorinda stopped—almost as much out of breath as that Mr. Gregsbury, M.P., who once

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sought to engage the incessant services of Nicholas Nickleby.

"I see," I said gravely, "I am indeed glad that I now know what a Useful Maid is. She is certainly a most merciful dispensation. And is she ever to be found?"

"She must be pretty," continued Clorinda, ignoring my question; "that's indispensable. Marmaduke can't endure any but good-looking people round him."

"She won't be 'round' Marmaduke much, I hope?" I murmured.

"Oh, good looks and charm are in the very atmosphere," said Clorinda lightly; "it's wonderful how they seem to pervade a house. They make every one feel so much more cheerful, somehow—don't you think so?"

"What other attributes must the Useful Maid possess—besides beauty?" I inquired.

"'Charm' includes nearly everything, you see," Clorinda meditated. "Oh yes, she must be perfectly amiable and smiling always. I feel a distinct *malaise* all day if I meet a frowning face, say, at breakfast. As to her duties, they will, of course, be many, but all

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pleasant ones. I had tabulated a list of them ; here it is. To begin with, she must always ask after my health every morning."

"Are you ill, then?" I inquired sympathetically, although a trifle incredulously, of my blooming visitor.

"Oh no; but I couldn't possibly keep a maid who neglected to ask me daily how I felt. It makes such a vast difference; if you've never tried it, you've no idea how much good it does. Why, I parted with Eliza—who was so well recommended and so industrious—only because I couldn't ever train her to do it. Can you imagine? Why, I said to her once, 'Eliza, I've cut my finger to the bone' (and so I had), and what do you think she answered? Just 'Yes'm,' and in such an indifferent tone, too—exactly as if I had said that I wanted hot water or a letter posted. Of course, I had to give her notice."

"And after the Useful Maid has duly inquired after your health," I observed, "what other duties has the day in store for her?"

"Oh, then she must dust rooms," said Clorinda. "Then at eleven she must appear,

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faultlessly neat, and say, 'Please, ma'am, do you wish any shopping done?' She must keep my accounts—I lost two pounds last week)—tell me when lunch is ready, press me to eat, and always notice if I lose my appetite, or don't fancy the dishes; she must fill up all my social hiatuses (only last week Marmaduke and I forgot to go to a dinner-party); she must write my letters, and docket my correspondence." (I doubt if Clorinda knew the exact meaning of "docket," but possibly she thought it sounded well.)

"Then, she must confide in me," Clorinda went on. "That is a most important point; I could never keep a servant who didn't tell me all about her love affairs, and generally make a friend of me. . . . How can you live in the house with some one so near to you as a Useful Maid, if you don't mutually feel you can love and trust each other? It's so unnatural otherwise. . . . Why, I thought that you, being in a way a Social Democrat, would have had something to say on that head!"

(I thought to myself that the Useful Maid

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very possibly might have something to say on it too—but I abstained from comment.)

Clorinda was now in full swing. She seemed, indeed, for the moment quite oblivious of the fact that her "Treasure" was merely a hypothetical one. "She must be musical, too," she went on, "for Marmaduke loves playing the violin; and she must have views about Ibsen and things; but perhaps not too many views, for Marmaduke likes to do most of the talking himself."

"All this seemed terribly suggestive of future complications, but I forbore to disturb Clorinda's innocence.

"And she must be interested, not only in Marmaduke and me, but in all our friends too."

"Dear Clorinda, I do not want to be critical," I said; "but you seem to me to ignore one side of the question. Presumably this Useful Maid, this jewel hid in the near future, this pearl beyond price that awaits your finding, will still, even when basking in the sunshine of your smile, have her own life to lead. She will not, like a Siamese twin—or, rather, a

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triplet—found her human counterpart in you and Marmaduke, and she will still have her own friends.”

“But I shall interest myself in *them*, too!” cried Clorinda. benevolently. “Oh, I know the sort of thing you are going to say; but she will be a girl of taste and discernment, or else I shall not engage her. I see, besides, no reason why she should not love Marmaduke and me. . . . Are we not nice people? It will all be very pleasant. . . . She will be always ready to sympathise and console; she must have that ‘calm, continual control’ that Austin Dobson talks about, and that Marmaduke so admires.”

“But Marmaduke mustn’t admire it too much,” I murmured.

“Oh, Marmaduke never interests himself in other women. He is so wrapt up in himself and his genius—he knows, you see, how wonderfully clever he is . . . how could he help knowing it? It isn’t as if he were at all like other men.”

I didn’t want Clorinda to climb Marmaduke’s pedestal and offer sacrifice to his shrine

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just then, so I drew her back to the prevailing topic. "I see," I said, "what you want is a reverent, busy, and capable acolyte to fan the domestic flame. And have you had any maids as yet that at all answer to this description?"

"Well, you see, I've never tried a Useful Maid before. . . . There's a great deal in what you call yourself—and people tell me they are perfect treasures. I've had several, of course, of the ordinary kind, but never a real Treasure. It's true, they all seem Treasures at first. And they were all fond of me. There was Rosina, for instance, who was so wonderful at finding my things when I'd dropped them anywhere, and who, I thought, was so particular about mending my clothes till I discovered that she had appropriated most of them. Then there was Maggie, who had such tact, and who cried for a week when she thought that I had said 'Good-night' to her in a chilly voice. So much affection was really almost embarrassing. . . . There was Wilkins, who was so much fonder of me than she was of her 'young man,' that she would keep him waiting for

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hours at the area railings while she got me ready for a party. It's true that the young man afterwards was had up for stealing our silver, but that was nothing to do with Wilkins, and she took it so much to heart that she took to drink and had to leave. There was Mary Ann, who said she had never thought it possible to love a lady as she did me, and who brought her friends in to supper when we were 'out'; there was Selina who——"

"I wonder," I remarked at this breathing-space, "that all these dispossessed paragons, these soon-fading 'phantoms of delight,' have not in their time taught you wisdom. But you are a child of nature still, who, like the immortal Mrs. Gamp, 'takes no trust herself, and puts a deal o' trust elsewheres.'"

"On the contrary, I am extremely practical," said Clorinda sharply; looking, in her offended dignity, so charming that I said no more. The Clorindas of this world must ever buy their own experience.

"Well," I said, as we parted, "I have at any rate learned something to-day. I know now what a Useful Maid is—when you catch

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her. Clorinda," I added gravely, "it seems to me that you want a fabulous animal—a fairy out of the Countess d'Aulnoy's pages—a kind of monster—not a real, live young woman at all. A person neither fish, flesh, nor good red herring. You should advertise not for a woman, but for an angel; and I have myself always felt that even angels, as housemates, would have their drawbacks. Seek, however, for your Useful Maid; I only wish you may get her—but when you do get her, notify the Museum authorities."

Clorinda is still seeking.

XII

CHILD STUDIES

I. THE MUMMY-ROOM

"If you are a 'good boy,'" I said to Maurice, who seemed just at that moment to be taking a somewhat depressed view of life and its responsibilities, "I'll take you to the British Museum, and show you the Mummy-Room."

"What's that?" asked Maurice, taking a finger out of his mouth doubtfully, and raising towards me his heavenly eyes and a countenance besmeared equally with ink and tears.

But I had no moral intent of either the Fairchild or Mrs. Sherwood kind. My offer was made entirely "without prejudice." "It's just a lot of people," I said, "very, very old, who were once great kings and queens, lying, dried up, in glass cases."

(A rainbow-like smile began to irradiate the clouds of Maurice's gloom.)

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"And all dressed in lovely clothes, in gold and silver, and with crowns on their heads."

Maurice was so pleased at this that he immediately stood on *his* head; and presently, washed, clothed, and in our right minds, we sallied forth.

The Mummy-Room was more or less deserted; and glinting rays of the April sunlight fell across the long cases of the forgotten Pharaohs and their once brilliant court.

"Are they all DEAD?" asked Maurice in a ghastly whisper, clutching my hand. "Not alive people at all? I mean, can they hear what we say?"

"Quite, quite dead," I assured him; while a small and untutored Cockney youth who stood near grinned sympathetically, and assured him that they were indeed "stiff 'uns." Maurice edged away and eyed him with extreme disfavour; he always shows good taste.

"They're very black, I know," he said to me in a whisper; "but still I thought they *might*, perhaps, you know, be only pretending."

As in the loneliness of the Mummy-room Maurice fixed his dark eyes upon me, I own

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that I began to feel distinctly uncomfortable. Whence did the child get his rapt look? An infant still trailing his clouds of glory—did he know the secrets of the tomb?

But Maurice relieved me by suddenly coming down to earth again. "Do they mummy everybody?" he asked; "will they mummy you an' me, and put us here?"

I attempted to explain that only great people, kings and queens and suchlike, were given in old days these honours.

"Have they mummied the old Queen yet?" asked Maurice.

Reassured on this important point, he allowed himself to be taken round the long gallery. We duly gazed on that disagreeable "Pre-historic Man," whose neolithic remains in their stone coffins are yet so unpleasantly suggestive; we looked feelingly at that little hand, still wearing on its wizened finger the loose signet-ring that belonged once to a "Lady of the Third Dynasty." The April sunlight waned, the last small street arab yawned and left the sacred precincts, and Maurice put on his most serious and heavenly look.

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"They ought to come out of their cases," he remarked severely. "It must be so dull for them in there. And why are they so very black and wound round so?"

"When people are dead they don't think about being dull," I said, and instantly felt all the inanity of my remark.

"Aunt Bessie, why do people DIE?" Maurice suddenly asked.

Poor Maurice! had he all the wisdom and the years too of the ages, he would be no more able to solve this riddle than now at five years old.

"People die"—I had my doubts as to whether the subject should be brought home to a mere child—"people die because"—I thought hard—"because their bodies, you know, can't last for ever; they wear out, like our suits and frocks. . . . And, when they die part of them, you know, goes to sleep and dreams——"

"What part?" asked Maurice.

I was not floored. "The part of you that thinks. . . . It's nice dreaming. . . . Did you never dream?"

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"I had a lovely dream once," said Maurice, putting on again the "trailing clouds of glory" that make this child so bewitching. "I dreamed that I was flying, you know; that I flew one night out of my crib and left nurse asleep in the room, and came out over the porch with gauzy wings, like a pantomime. . . . And I floated over the Square, and saw the houses and churches and steeples down there below like a picshur. . . . An' when I was tired I jes' seemed to sit an' rest on pink an' yellow clouds, like cotton-wool. . . . D'you mean *that* kind of dreaming?"

"When you die," I said, "you go, if you are a good boy" (I felt as though I were in a manner reverting to the school of Mrs. Sherwood), "you go to beautiful countries where the sun always shines—to a land where you are never sick, or ill, or naughty, or cross, or anything. . . . And if you are a bad boy you—you——"

Here I stopped. Mere force of habit was carrying me into confusion and among the Calvinistic bogies of my early youth. But I need not have troubled. Maurice was not

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listening ; he was inventing a theory of his own.

"Ah !" he said, with a deep sigh. "If we met some dead people, *THEY* would tell us."

But I did not want to meet dead people just then ; indeed, Maurice's conversation was far from reassuring, at least to one nervously inclined. "We know where they go," I said, almost crossly.

"Yes, I know, too. They become mummies ; not, I mean, *my* sort of Mummy, my Mummy at home, but these old black things."

"No ! *that's* the part that dies," I reiterated, feeling myself once more, to my infinite relief, on firm ground. "It's only that part of you that *thinks*, you know, that goes on living when all the rest of you is dead."

Here Maurice fixed his heavenly eyes in their inscrutable depth and seriousness full upon me. "I don't believe it," he said simply, with all the crushing superiority of five years old.

I quailed before the illumined spirit of the Child of the Twentieth Century. "You don't believe it !" I gasped.

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"There's no sense in it at all," he said. "When your thinking part" (here he touched the top of his curly head) "dies, you all dies too: your arms, your legs, your body—like that mummy there. I know, 'cause when my Bunny was dead I digged him up an' looked. Tell me something I *can* understand, not that silly old stuff; you make me feel all mixy."

I felt utterly crushed. "But you believe fairy-tales?" I said reproachfully; "what about the 'Water-Babies'?" We had been reading that epic just before. "Why not believe this?"

"Is this a fairy-tale?" asked Maurice—as who should say he might then reconsider the question.

But I had had enough of argument, and took refuge in a tried formula: "When you are older," I said, with some attempt at supreme dignity, "you will be wiser and understand better." And we left the dangerous vicinity of the mummies.

But Maurice had floored me utterly; and, what was worse, he knew it.

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Alas! for the vanishing clouds of glory, and for the shadows of the prison-house!

Maurice is a determined materialist.

But I am glad to record that he yet holds to certain rites. He still says his prayers every night. And still he wears his rapt look while saying them.

2. CLOUDS OF GLORY

"You must be the Chief Cannibal," said Maurice.

But, as it happened, I didn't want to be Chief Cannibal. Being Chief Cannibal, or chief anything, for that matter, entailed a considerably greater amount of energy than I felt ready, at the moment, to expend.

"I would rather be the Englishman and be eaten up, if I may lie down and have the British flag unfurled over me," I said, temporising.

But no such respite was allowed me. For, naturally, when it came to the question of unfurling the British flag, Maurice felt that the part could be safely entrusted to no one but himself.

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So I threw imaginary assegais, and ate Maurice up several times, each time, perhaps, with a somewhat impaired appetite. The Chief Cannibal, I felt, was hardly living up to his part. He was, as Huck Finn would say, "no shucks of a cannibal." . . . But we had played unintermittedly since lunch-time; and for pure exhaustion of mind and body commend me to playing "pretence games" alone with a child for several hours. Maurice, who is just six, does not like any games but "pretence games"; he eschews toys pure and simple, and prefers inventing as he goes on. To me, such inventions seem as hard almost as poor Mr. Casaubon's "eating of thistles."

A welcome ring at the bell now arresting my tyrant's attention, I stopped midway in his demolition, and seized the opportunity to mop my exhausted brow.

"Is it a caller?" asked Maurice, in a stage whisper, his large eyes waxing larger in his dismay—to him a caller was indeed something worse than a cannibal—"Say you're not at home!"

I suggested to Maurice that the best way of

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assuring any dread "caller" that we were "not at home" was not, perhaps, to dance a war-whoop in the passage. He was not convinced—more especially, as the bell proved only to be the man with the gas-rate.

"They go away all the quicker if I make a noise," he said; "they'd think we were real cannibals, or perhaps Red Indians."

The simile was a just one. I felt that my attire was not unlike that of a Red Indian. I had been half-an-hour under the dining-room table, playing the game known as "Bears"; and a quarter of an hour inside a doubtful sheepskin rug, as a "cannibal"; I had also adopted, successively between whiles the trying parts of a shark, a stoker, a ship's steward, and a Boer prisoner; and had been, besides, all the time, in constant and dishevelled exercise.

Maurice, nevertheless, did not seem either heated or disturbed. This, of course, may have been owing to the fact that, like the manager of a theatre, he invariably appropriated to his own use all the best parts, and used me more or less as his slave. He was, so to speak, always Tilburina, and I was equally

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always the Confidante. I was not allowed to unduly assert my individuality; if I did, I got immediately snubbed. But I must always, like the chorus of a Greek play, be alert and interested. In this he differs from the child of Miss Edgeworth's theory: "What do you do," some one is said to have inquired of that lady, "to make children so fond of you?" "Oh," said the moral story-teller amiably, "I just sit down on the floor and let them *roll over me*." But Maurice is more exacting than that.

Now, we started on an altogether new play—the fifteenth, I computed, since lunch; a mystic play called "Desert Islands." The desert island in chief was the big sofa, fenced in appropriately by dining-room chairs, which represented rocks. We climbed from the carpet, which was the vast ocean—Maurice meanwhile enacting the part of a drowning sailor, and shrieking wildly for help, menaced by sharks and German navies indiscriminately. I do not know why Maurice seems to regard the Germans as our natural enemies; possibly it is merely popular sentiment imbibed from the nursemaid, or from his firm friend the

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policeman at the corner. I felt that I was really distinguishing myself at this game; but, alas! just as I had got used to my rôle, and was putting my whole heart and soul into it, it was changed with the rapidity of a transformation scene, and without any warning at all, to another. The "little actor was already conning another part." (I gather that time, to the mind of the average child, must seem really interminable. I verily believe that Maurice goes through aeons and abysses of time, while I am only counting fifteen.)

"Now," said Maurice, "I'll be the red-cross knight fastened to the dragon's cave, and you must be the dragon coming to eat me."

This seemed a strange variant on the story of Perseus and Andromeda, nevertheless I prepared to obey. So on I came as the dragon (it was extremely fatiguing) on all fours, and uttering terrible sounds.

"You're a silly!" said Maurice. "Dragons don't come like that. They come quite softly and all hissing. And you must have a rug tied on for a tail, and then, when you get

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quite near, you must begin to spit out blue fire."

As Maurice seemed so well acquainted with the habits of dragons, I stopped half-way in my howl, and waited for further information. It is always interesting to know how to emit blue fire. But I need not have troubled; Maurice was already, as usual, several subjects ahead of me.

"This is a boat," he suddenly announced, "a boat on the river. Don't you see the rushes growing on the banks?" (looking intently towards the quondam dragon's cave.) "I can see the water-babies and the wicked otter . . . and all the little trouts, too, under the stones. . . . Be quick! Hook in some for dinner! . . . Now, do get in! we must row directly to South Africa and fight the Boers, and wave the Union Jack. *You* must play too!" (This suddenly to me, who was taking a five minutes' welcome respite.) "I'm the ship's captain, and I always turn out all lazy people! You must be the mate, looking out with a telescope for the bad German ships. *That's* not the way to look through a telescope."

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(this with profound contempt). "Tommy Jones does it much better!"

(Tommy Jones, I may remark, was the charwoman's little boy, a youth with a terrible squint and a perfectly vacant expression.)

"That's right; now you're really playing quite nicely," said Maurice considerately. "It's a *lovely* game, isn't it? I hope it's a long time off bedtime yet?"

At this I felt somewhat conscience-stricken, for I had been just mentally engaged computing the few minutes that remained to my tyrant. (This it was that had made me so remiss with the telescope.) I gave Maurice a compunctious hug; but it so happens that he hates being hugged, and he immediately put on a fiendish scowl. He is always a strange mixture of angel and devil, as are so often those who still trail the remnant of their "clouds of glory."

"Isn't it lovely on the sea?" said Maurice. "It has got dark (turn the light out!) and I can see the stars all looking down on me, and saying, 'Good-night, Mr. Captain.' I mean to be a captain when I grow up, or else, perhaps,

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an engine-driver. Which do you think would be grandest? But what I should like to be grown up for most is, that nobody could punish me any more, and I could punish everybody else. Wouldn't I punish them too! I don't mean just to sit at home and write tiresome old books. Oh, nurse, is that you? I really can't come now" (with dignity) "for I'm half-way to South Africa in my ship, and if I get out all my passengers will be drowned."

But Nurse has, so to speak, "been there" before, and she is even with her young charge. He is gently but firmly extracted from his imaginary island, boat, or ship. He goes off, as usual, protesting.

"I'm not at all sleepy," he says, "and we could have gone on playing for *hours*, couldn't we? But," as an afterthought and a kind of solatium, "*you* can go on playing, if you like; don't, please, stop!" (For Maurice, I have noticed, always likes to think that he is keeping me hard at it.)

Now, did he really think that I was going to go on sitting in that "desert island" all the

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evening? If so, I must be a better actor than I had ever imagined.

I sit there, nevertheless, for some minutes motionless, after Maurice's departure—thinking of the strange and mysterious mind of the child. Compared with the lethargic minds of "grown-ups" the mind of a child is constantly imagining, ever on the stretch. Is it, as Wordsworth suggests, the echo of vanished existences that still resounds faintly through "the sleep and the forgetting"? To Maurice the thing imagined is so much greater than the thing that is. His mind, to him, is very literally "a kingdom"; it can make "the desert blossom like the rose." The child finds the purest joy ever in the make-believe; the magic carpet that of old transported the fairy prince whither he would is his in all reality. His wings have not grown heavy with the prose of life; he can soar where he will; his are still the clouds of glory. Wonderful childhood that, not content with a present and real world, imagines and revels in another!

I went upstairs. Maurice, now in yet a

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third world—the world of dreams—lay serenely smiling in his crib. Were the angels whispering to him? or did I hear him murmur the words “cannibals” and “dragons” softly in his sleep?

XIII

MRS. CARLYLE AND HER SERVANTS:

"My maid, you know, that began so well, and was such an angel at first," a charming young married woman said to me the other day, "has disappointed me dreadfully. I used to think her so nice, and now I can't bear her near me at all. I can't think why I thought her so refined, and attractive, and intelligent; she has become quite *pudding-faced*."

One is irresistibly reminded of this not unusual type of mistress in reading the new batch of the *Carlyle Letters*, just published. The old controversy is again awaked; the old enthralling interest in the Cheyne Row ménage has revived. Alas, for the base uses to which even the very elect may descend! Extremes meet; on this familiar ground the woman of brilliant intellect and the mediocre,

¹ June 1903.

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overburdened housewife find a common attraction ; nay, the spark of genius positively revels amid the *res angusta domi* of life. On this topic we often "suffer fools gladly ;" it is no wonder that a Mrs. Carlyle should interest the average person.

There is a strong humanity about Mrs. Carlyle that attracts even the simple reader who knows and understands nothing of her famous husband's works. Even the devotees of *Home Gush* and *Sketchy Pars* can revel in the thrilling stories of the domestic struggles in the Cheyne Row household. They feel, perhaps, that they may surround themselves in a manner with a classic halo, while yet basking in the sunshine of their favourite topic : "I really must try to read one of Carlyle's books now," said a lady to me lately, taking down from the shelves a dusty *Sartor Resartus* ; "his wife's letters are *so* interesting." After a short wrestle she returned that revered classic to its since undisturbed repose, wondering "why such a clever woman should have been thrown away on such a husband."

The long row of "general" servants at

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Cheyne Row—what of them? Does one not feel a little sorry—despite, or rather because of, their mistress's tirades—for these poor creatures? The dark kitchen of Cheyne Row looks dreary enough now in its semi-museum-like dignity of state; it looked, probably, but little brighter under the careful *régime* of Mrs. Carlyle, when the "Peesweep" Sereetha,¹ "dottle" Helen, Ann the "Button," or Elizabeth the "Mooncalf" severally "dreed their weird" within its shades. Mrs. Carlyle, accustomed to Scottish thrift, was possibly a little exacting. And that she had what is called "a stormy soul" can easily be imagined by the diligent student of the *Letters*. Her stories one feels instinctively lose nothing in the telling. She is a true literary alchemist; under her magic hand the poor, trivial, little shortcomings of Helen, Ann, or "Little Charlotte" gain, in their turn, almost the dignity of a classic. To be

¹ "Peesweep," explains Carlyle gravely, "is a peewit, lapwing; with which swift but ineffectual bird Sereetha seemed to have similarity."—*Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, i. 23.

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scolded by Mrs. Carlyle was—if these unfortunates had only known it—to gain a place in history.

It was not an easy time—as compared by the standard of modern ideas—that these successive servants had in the Carlyle household. Times have altered, wages have risen, and the position of the servant, even of the “general,” has vastly improved. Even during the Carlyle days the change began to make itself felt, as the lady records, somewhere about 1864, in a domestic “Budget” addressed to her lord; and the last days of the Cheyne Row housekeeping were, of necessity, more luxurious than the first. But, for most of the period, the servants had but £12 a year; they did their own washing, which was hung out to dry in the garden; they baked all the bread; they slept in the dark, damp, back kitchen, half-sunk, like so many London kitchens, into the ground; not exactly, one thinks, healthful or cheering conditions of life. Besides, the house, as any one can see, was a large one for one servant to keep in order; and Mrs. Carlyle, by her own showing, was often ailing, and incapable,

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therefore, of giving much methodical help. One of the servants, indeed (I think it was a girl from the Free Kirk, who had found grace), said: "It is impossible for one woman to do all your work;" and the later servants stipulated often for a rise in wages. History does not say that they bargained for "every Wednesday evening out." Their meals were more or less erratic; "for the most part," as Mrs. Carlyle candidly confesses, "they scrambled for their living out of ours." The wonder, surely, is not that they were so bad, but that they were so good.

Mrs. Carlyle lived some thirty odd years in Chelsea, and had during that time some thirty-five odd servants. This, perhaps, to some who nowadays change their servants every six weeks, may not seem an overpowering number. But it must be remembered that those days were the days when servants stayed long in one place; far longer, certainly, than they do now. There was not the same restless spirit of change in the world. So that thirty-five servants—allowing for the fact that one of the thirty-five stayed eleven and an-

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other five and a half years—seem a fair number for the thirty years. Here (so far as I have been able to ascertain from various sources) is the record :—

- June 1834 . . . Bessy Barnet ("Our romantic maid."
Brought to Chelsea by the Carlyles
on their arrival).
- 1835 Woman sent by Mrs. Austin (sister-
in-law).
- 1835 Irish Roman Catholic (name unknown.)
Rebellious, mutinous.
- Autumn 1835 . . . Sereetha, the "Peesweep" (small girl
from Chelsea).
- Autumn 1835 . . . Anne Cook (brought by Carlyle from
Scotland ; sent for by dying mother
a few months later).
- (Hiatus of a year or so, filled by Unknown.)
- Autumn 1837 . . . Helen Mitchell ("Kirkcaldy Helen)."
- August 1840 . . . " " gets drunk, but re-
forms and stays ; dusts Carlyle's
- July 1843 . . . books, and goes into raptures about
"the Maister's" *Sartor Resartus*.
- September 1846 . . Helen Mitchell leaves to "better"
herself.
- End of 1846 . . . A Girl from the Free Kirk (who
stayed six days). Called, "Pes-
sima" (the Worst). ("Go in the
Devil's Name," said Carlyle to her.)
- 1846 An Old Woman nicknamed "Slow-
coach." ("An old, half-dead,
grumbling soul.")

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- 1846 "Postie" (the Postman's Wife;—
temporary help.
- January 1, 1847 . . Ann No. 1. (A "Little Button,"
with a Basis of Reason.)
- October 1847 . . . , (Offers kindly to "air" the
absent Carlyle's bed by sleeping
in it.)
- Autumn 1848 . . . , Leaves to get Married.
- Autumn 1848 . . . Helen Mitchell returns.
- February 1849 . . . , , gets very drunk again.
- 1849 Elizabeth Sprague. ("A pretty, sweet-
looking creature, with innocent,
winning ways.").
- December 1849. . . , , is lectured for
sulking.
- August 1850 . . . Eliza (a Young Person—a stop-gap).
- September 1850. . Emma (Distinguished and soft-
voiced).
- May 1851 Ann No. 2. (A punctual, trustworthy
woman; it was hoped she "would
stay for ever," but she left, appa-
rently from illness.)
- July 1852 A new "Beautiful" Servant—other-
wise nameless. (Read the Let-
ters: an "Austrian Spy;" and a
"helpless, ill-trained, low-minded
Goose").
- July 1852 "Little Martha."
- August 27, 1852 . . "Irish Fanny." (The heroine of a
burglar episode, and the brave dis-
coverer of some 200 bugs. "Ran
away into matrimony of a kind.")

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December 1853 . .	Ann, No. 3. (Hard, practical, unsympathising.)
March 1857 . . .	„ cuts her finger with a bath brick.
August 1857 . .	„ is prescribed camomile tea by Miss Jewsbury.
November 1857 . .	„ A black beetle runs into her ear.
March 29, 1858 . .	„ Her face becomes “diabolic,” and she leaves.
March 29, 1858 . .	“Miss Cameron.” (Lady-help; <i>soi-disant</i> daughter of half-pay lieutenant; Irish impostor; convicted of lying and theft.)
June 1858 . . .	“Little Charlotte.” (At first “a good, biddable, clever, little creature.”)
February 1859 . .	„ is described as “the Good Girl of a Fairy-tale.”
February 1860 . .	„ cries her eyes out at the dog Nero’s death.
August 1860 . .	„ is discharged for “general muddle.”
August 1860 . .	“Old Jane.” (Was seventy-one years old; couldn’t cook, and stole the beer; besides “requiring to be supplied with a pair of <i>young legs</i> .”)

(Change to two servants now effected, with groans thereat.)

September 1860 . . “Tall Charlotte” (housemaid).

„ „ Sarah (cook).

November 1860 . . “Little Charlotte” returns.

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- 1861 Matilda (cook). Was sent soon to the hospital for an operation.
- July 1861 . . . Margaret (a Welsh or Irish girl).
- September 1862. . Maria (housemaid). Goes into joyful hysterics at Mrs. Carlyle's recovery and return.
- October 1862 . . Is discharged for domineering impertinence. (A "Bubbly Jock.")
- 1861 (?) or 1862 (?) Elizabeth (cook).
- November 1862. . , "Horse, Cow, Mooncalf, and Brute-Beast."
- 1862 "Little Flo." ("An honest, truthful, industrious little girl. An incomparable small housemaid.")
- January 1863 . . , ("An incomparable small demon; an imp; a poisonous viper.")
- End of 1862 . . Mary (cook). Traduced by "Flo," but stays on after her traducer had left. ("The worst of girls.")
- 1863 Lizzy (housemaid).
- 1864 Helen (housemaid). "Big, beautiful Blockhead," and "Incorrigible Goose."
- 1864 Fanny (housemaid).
- 1864 Mrs. Warren (cook-housekeeper).
- 1865 Jessie Hiddlestone (Hereditary housemaid and lady's-maid). (The last-named two were in the house at Mrs. Carlyle's death).

There are evidences, indeed, that Jessie

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Hiddlestone, although a hereditary housemaid, (*i.e.* the daughter of a former servant), would—had Mrs. Carlyle lived—not for long have continued in the angel stage: her disillusion had already begun. The fact is, that Mrs. Carlyle's "Method" seems to have been just a trifle demoralising. That "clever lady, a little too much given to insecticide"—as the late Lord Bowen called her—must be pronounced to be more than a little variable. She expected unlimited devotion from her servants, and not unfrequently, strange to say, got it. That she could exercise great personal charm is nowhere more evident than here. Her servants wept over her, they fondled her, they occasionally adored her. But it is difficult, especially in every-day, prosaic, domestic relations, to live for ever on the heights; and, when these same servants became delinquents, their previous affection did but aggravate their misdeeds. Thus Mary, the cook, who, after crying over her mistress ill upstairs, has in stray followers to tea in the kitchen, gets summary and contumelious dismissal; Maria, the housemaid, goes into raptures of joy over

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Mrs. Carlyle's restoration to health—she meets her fate none the less. "I have foreseen for long," writes the lady, "even when she was capering about me, and kissing my hands and shawl, that this "emotional young lady would not wear well; and that some fine day her self-conceit and arrogance would find the limits of my patience." Alas, genius has its limitations—and the fool often "sees to the ways of her household" better than the learned lady. Less wise in her generation than many other less clever people, Mrs. Carlyle seems to have made the mistake of alternating petting with scolding; or rather, she canonised her maids and subsequently dethroned them. Nay, when annoyed her feelings were something of the nature of those of Mrs. Proudie over her arch-enemy, the curate Slope; she was not content with merely slaying her enemy, she could have eaten her afterwards with pleasure. She had the faults, too, of the "artistic temperament"; her servants once dethroned, she appears to have listened to any gossip or tittle-tattle about their failings from stray "helps" and charwomen who "dropped in casual," and

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accepted it, like Othello, as Gospel truth. No one can deny that when she was angry she was very angry; she gave way to what, in a less charming lady, might perhaps have been called "temper." Her emotions are real thunder and lightning of the gods; pity it is that it should bear a touching likeness to the breaking of a butterfly on a wheel. It is such talent thrown away; she spends rhetoric that would have amazed and stimulated the present-day ladies' political circles, either on the stupid ignorance of "general servants," or on the reducing of a plumber's bill some few shillings. In this latter transaction, indeed, she gives herself a bad headache into the bargain, and "shakes all day," she tells a correspondent, "as if with St. Vitus' dance." The servants—cheap and taken from a low class, as they mostly were—cannot all have been bad; human nature is human nature everywhere, even in Chelsea in the 'fifties; and people there—no more than anywhere else—were alternately angel and devil. The changes, it will be noticed, were often rapid; thus Elizabeth, "far the most loveable servant I have had," speedily

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degenerates into "caprices and sullen temper;" "Little Charlotte," after posing as "the good girl of a fairy-tale," is soon discarded as heedless and a "muddler"; Jessie Hiddlestone, "the most promising-looking servant we have had," "so quick, so willing, so intelligent, so warmly human," presently degenerates not merely into "pudding-facedness," but into a "vixen" and a "humbug." This lady, now Mrs. Broadfoot, of Thornhill, has recently given testimony to Carlyle's merits as a master; it would be interesting to know her opinion of her former mistress. Mrs. Carlyle frankly confesses in another case her own caprice, as thus: "Little Flo, my incomparable small housemaid, has turned out an incomparable small demon."

Yes, it must be owned that there was a great deal of the "Eternal Feminine" about Mrs. Carlyle. She was quick, impulsive, eager; in at least a dozen moods a day; "everything by turns, and nothing long." With a strange inconsistency, however, she neither expected nor tolerated "moods" in her domestics. She might, one thinks, have shown a trifle more

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recognition of the stray merits of these poor creatures, who toiled in an ungrateful world for a penurious wage. There are still, no doubt, a good many people who expect their servants to be incarnations of all the virtues at so many pounds a-year; but Mrs. Carlyle's brilliant intellect should have saved her from such a fallacy. Genius, however, so far as I have observed, is seldom brought to bear on the simpler problems of life. Mrs. Carlyle's enthusiasm for housekeeping and domestic management would probably have been more effective if it had been less comet-like, and more of a slow and steady radiance. Sometimes, no doubt, illness made the poor lady hard to please; she was, latterly, a neurotic. Thus, in July 1864, her worst time, she quarrels even with Dr. John Carlyle, her devoted brother-in-law, and writes home her directions about "those idiot servants."

But Mrs. Carlyle, it is plain, did not judge her servants by her own standard. She appears almost, in theory, to regard them as white slaves—whose own interests in life are to count as *nil*. Thus, the first Ann, a "nice, cleanly,

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orderly, quiet little woman," with, moreover, a "basis of pure reason," makes up her mind to get married. "People must get married before all," her mistress comments coldly. Or "Matilda" is taken ill with a serious complaint, and has to go to the hospital; "what she could mean in going into a new service with such a complaint, I am at a loss to conceive." "Kirkcaldy Helen," after some eleven years' patient service and devotion to her mistress, goes off into drink, and Mrs. Carlyle, for the dog Nero's ailments all tenderness and solicitude, is almost cruel in her references to the unhappy girl.

No, Mrs. Carlyle, it must be confessed, did not go far towards a satisfactory solution of the "Servant Question." A stupider woman—after such a forty years' experience—would probably have gone much nearer to solving it. But there is an irresistible charm about the whole story, the whole *entourage*. It is not only genius; it is the touch of nature that does it; yes, the eternal touch of nature that is said to make the whole world kin. How many more Carlyle Letters will still appear, it is

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impossible to say; one thing is certain, there can never be too many for the public. I can even find it in my heart to regret that Geraldine Jewsbury—Mrs. Carlyle's life-long friend—should, when dying, have as a matter of conscience burnt all hers. The many attacks on Mr. Froude seem to me to be out of place; for the life-story, which he disclosed, requires, surely, no violent partisanship. The Letters of husband and wife, read together, tell their own story clearly enough; and they will always attract, for they have the stamp of genius, the distinction of pathos, and the irresistible charm of a human document.

THE END

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THE BRIDE'S BOOK

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